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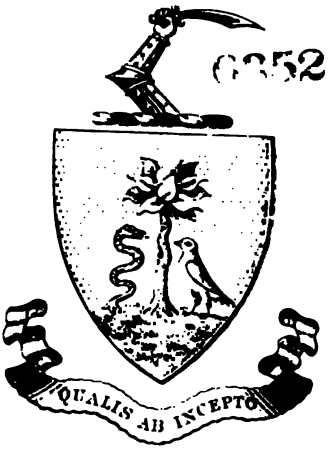


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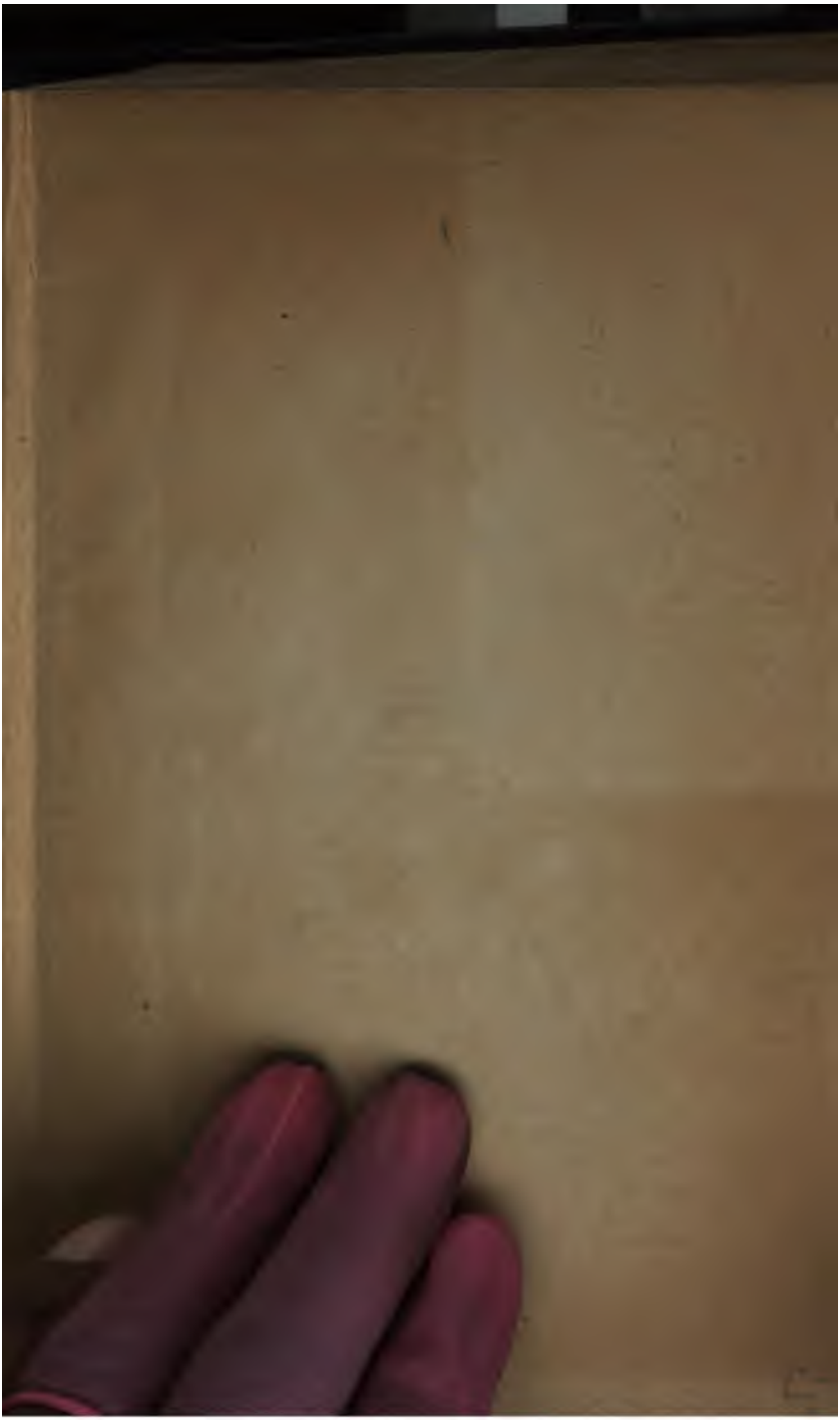

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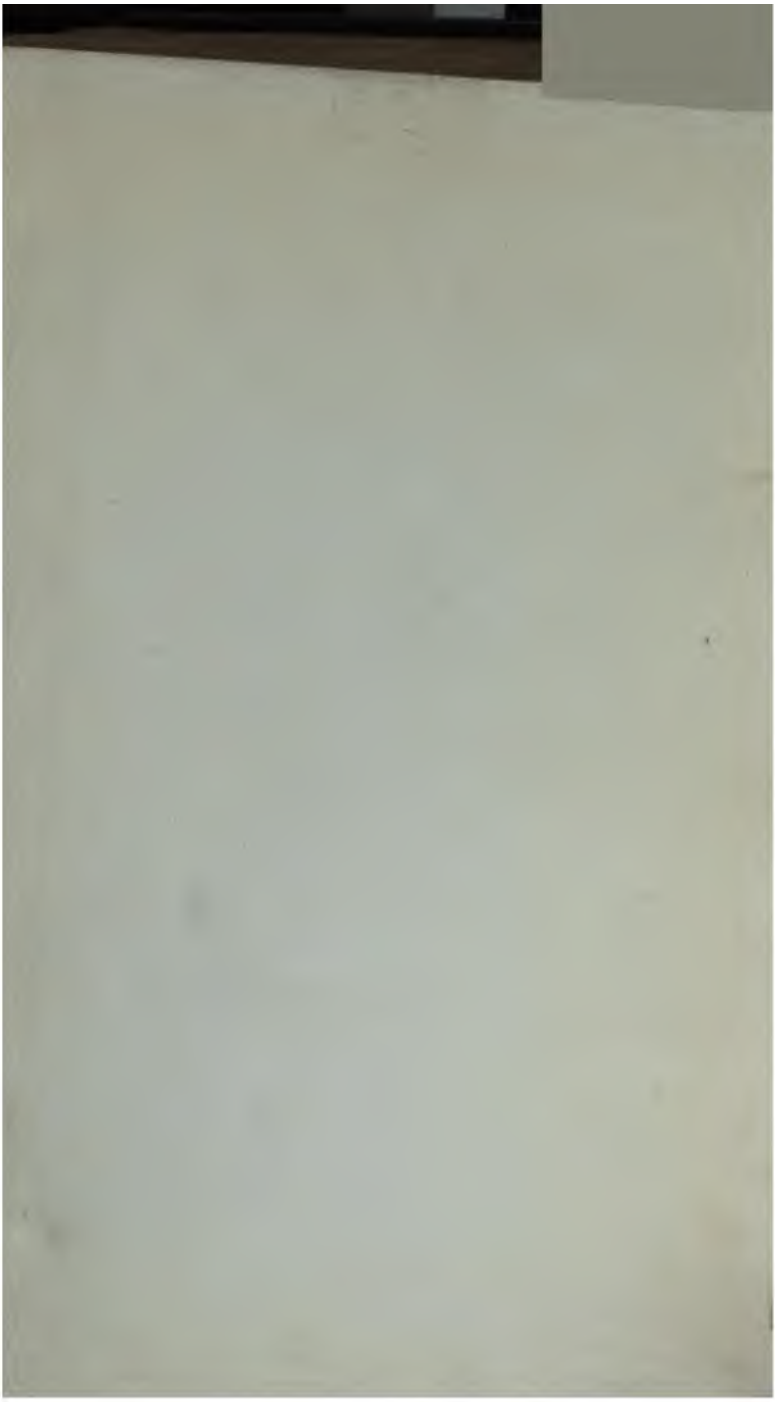

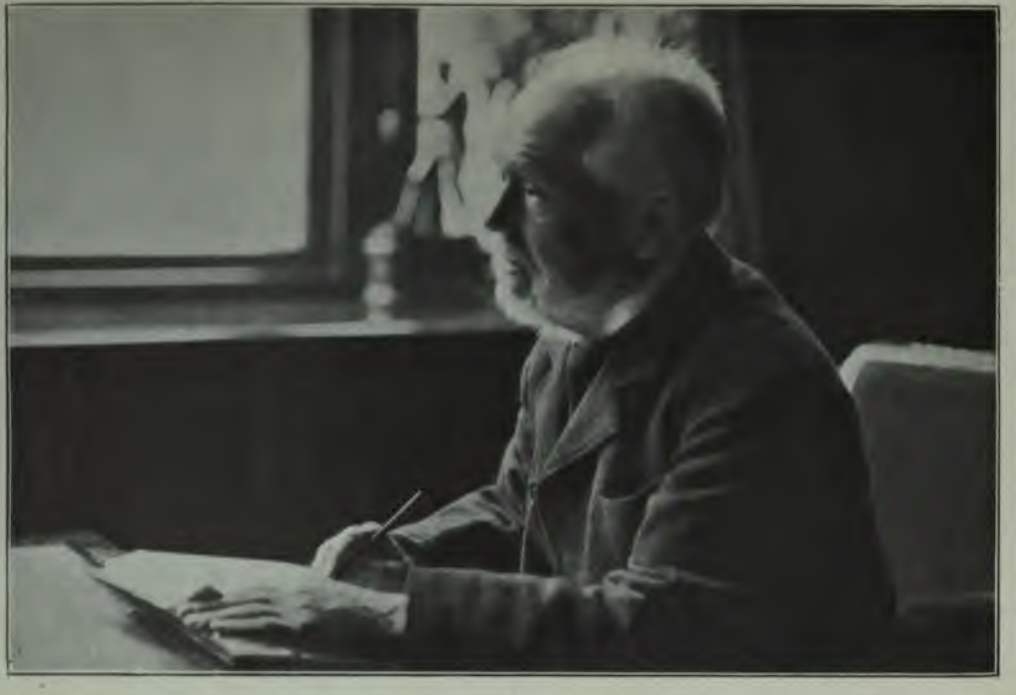

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# MY PRISON LIFE

BY

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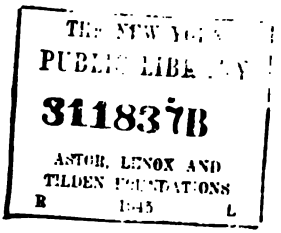
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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE LORD NORTHCLIFFE

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS INTEREST IN PRISON REFORM

AND

OF THE SYMPATHY, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND HELP

HE HAS ACCORDED TO

THE AUTHOR

*February 1907*

# CONTENTS


| CHAP. | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| | INTRODUCTION . . . . . | ix |
| | **PART I** | |
| I. | PREVIOUS TO LEAVING ENGLAND . . . | 1 |
| II. | IN ARGENTINE. ARREST AND JOURNEY TO ENGLAND | 9 |
| III. | HOLLOWAY . . . . . | 15 |
| IV. | TRIAL AND SENTENCE . . . | 22 |
| V. | WORMWOOD SCRUBBS . . . . | 34 |
| VI. | FIRST GLIMPSE OF PARKHURST . . | 54 |
| VII. | PORTLAND . . . . . | 66 |
| VIII. | PORTLAND *(continued)* . . . | 79 |
| IX. | PENTONVILLE . . . . . | 107 |
| X. | PENTONVILLE *(continued)* . . . | 131 |
| XI. | PARKHURST . . . . . | 145 |
| XII. | PARKHURST *(continued)* . . . | 175 |
| XIII. | FAREWELL TO PARKHURST. RETURN TO FREEDOM | 223 |
| | **PART II** | |
| | PENAL SERVITUDE AS ADMINISTERED | |
| XIV. | DEFECTS IN ADMINISTRATION . . . | 237 |
| XV. | PRISON DIETARY . . . . | 258 |

| CHAP. | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| XVI. | PRISON LABOUR | 267 |
| XVII. | INEQUALITY OF SENTENCES | 279 |
| XVIII. | PRISON OFFENCES AND PUNISHMENTS | 289 |
| XIX. | THE TREATMENT OF FOREIGN PRISONERS | 312 |
| XX. | PRISON CHAPLAINS AND PRISON LIBRARIES | 332 |
| XXI. | PRISON DOCTORS AND PRISON HOSPITALS | 348 |
| XXII. | SUGGESTIONS FOR REFORM | 361 |

# INTRODUCTION

In April last, immediately on my release from Parkhurst, I arranged to write a series of articles descriptive of Convict life.

I had long meditated such a work, and in conversation with the officials at Parkhurst had for years past made no secret of my intention to undertake it, should I live to be restored to freedom.

In furtherance of that intention I had contrived to make my experience as varied and complete as possible. I had volunteered for several exceptionally onerous posts from which I should have been excused had I not applied for them. I had sedulously cultivated relations of respect and good-will with the great majority of the disciplinary staff, and I thus became familiar with the inner working of the system. The cell, the workshop, the exercise yard, the library, the chapel, the infirmary, I knew them all, not merely as frequenting or using them, but as taking an active, though humble, part in their actual administration. The only phase of prison life with which I did not familiarize myself, was the method of meting out punishment for breaches of discipline and infraction of prison rules. My investigating zeal did not carry me so far as to seek admission to that last and most anomalous of all penal institutions—the prison within a prison.

The surprising, and quite unexpected interest which my articles excited, led to their continuation for a far longer time than had been originally contemplated. Through the whole period that interest was manifested

in a gratifying but somewhat onerous shape, by a constant flow of correspondence relating to almost every topic I touched upon. Many of the letters thus received were of a remarkable character; retired warders and ex-convicts kindly testified to the absolute accuracy of my statements, and begged me to continue my story; others imparted to me individual experiences and complaints. In addition to all these I received many pathetic letters from the distracted parents, wives, and relatives of prisoners, asking for information or advice. In several of these letters the hope was expressed that I would collect the articles and republish them in a more permanent form.

The present work is my answer to this request. It contains the bulk of what has appeared, carefully revised throughout, and in some parts rewritten. It is divested of many incidental reminiscences and anecdotes which, though suitable to the columns of a newspaper, might appear out of place in a less ephemeral production. I have further dwelt more elaborately, and more exclusively from the public point of view, on the shortcomings, the defects, the inconsistencies and the failures of the existing system of penal servitude, and have stated more thoroughly, and in greater detail, the remedies and reforms which appear most practicable, and most calculated to bring about a better state of things.

As regards these reforms, while of course I speak with the knowledge of a man who has become acquainted by actual experience with the details of the system, I am too fully alive to the difficulties in the way, to presume for one moment to dogmatize. My experiences, it is true, have been personal, terribly personal, but I have honestly striven to approach the subject of reform, free from all personal bias, or warp, or grudge—free also from every taint of self-interest or self-advertisement.

Several former inmates of Convict prisons have at different times during the last twenty years written about their experiences of penal servitude, but, so far as I can recollect, they have all been open to one serious criticism. They have told much that is interesting and suggestive. They have pointed out mistakes, abuses, and failures, some of which may have even been remedied through their instrumentality, but they have all created the impression that they were infinitely more concerned with their own personal grievances, their real or imaginary hardships and wrongs, than about the necessity of reform from the public point of view. In fact, they have thought much more about themselves than about the public. Now, the public is not greatly concerned with the personal affairs of ordinary individuals, nor, except where there have been palpable miscarriages of justice or unwarrantable abuses of authority, is it very easily moved by mere complaints. It is extraordinary how very philosophically we regard other people's wrongs, and how keenly excited we are about our own. I have striven to avoid this mistake, and to this, and to no other cause, I attribute the interest and the attention which my articles attracted in their serial form.

In the revision and rearrangement of this work I adhere to the same course. I have steadily disregarded all appeals and all temptations to talk about myself, and my own affairs, instead of my subject. When, as I often do, I refer to my own prison experiences it is merely by way of illustration, and never, I can honestly affirm, either by way of complaint or self-laudation. I put myself in the witness-box, as it were, to testify to some practice, to vouch for some incident. About the controversial circumstances connected with the great financial disaster which led to my trial and conviction, I am deliberately and

determinedly silent. My side of the case has never been made public. Having borne for years the burden of severe and undiscriminating reprobation, having paid the maximum legal penalty for all delinquencies—real or assumed, admitted or denied—I abstain now from reviving controversies which would but reopen old wounds, and reawaken very sad memories. Were I to do otherwise, I should be compelled to reflect on many who can no longer defend themselves, and I should inevitably give pain to some who are still living and to whom I wish nothing but good.

I am encouraged in this resolve by the fairness, I may even say generosity, with which I have been welcomed back to freedom, and by the opportunities which have been afforded me of undertaking congenial, and I hope useful, work.

My desire is, that, by means of these pages, I may fully acquaint my readers with the manner in which our penal system is administered, that they may be led to realize what the life of a convict undergoing penal servitude actually is; that they may see clearly how penal servitude fails to reform, to deter, or to punish; how tenderly it deals with the hardened, how heavily it presses upon first offenders; and, finally, that I may put before my readers suggestions which may lead to the introduction of a wiser and more successful system.

I ought to add, that while my suggestions are entirely my own, I have freely discussed most of them with many experienced officers in the convict service. I hope I have profited by the frankness and the fulness of their criticism, by their readiness to help me to a right conclusion, and by the unfailing good-will and sympathy they have so generously shown me. I desire formally to record my obligations to them.

*February 1907*

# MY PRISON LIFE

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### PREVIOUS TO LEAVING ENGLAND

In order to tell intelligently the tale of my Prison Life, it is, I fear, necessary that I should inflict upon the reader some brief details of my previous career. I must also glance very cursorily at the serious financial disaster with which my name was associated, and which inflicted heavy losses and much consequent distress upon thousands of innocent investors. The deep sympathy which I feel for these unfortunate people is certainly not diminished, on the contrary, it is heightened and accentuated, by the fact that I myself shared to the full in their misfortune. It will not be unbecoming in me to point out that, in addition to my terrible load of obloquy and imprisonment, there was no greater victim among the sufferers than I, no ruin more complete than mine.

Of my parentage and early years it will suffice to say that my father occupied a respectable subordinate position in the Ways and Means Office of the House of Commons, and that my mother was a woman of great intellectual gifts, well known as a lecturer on English literature.

Many who read these lines will recollect the lectures and writings of Mrs. Clara Lucas Balfour. She was the author of several well-known books, which were very popular in their day, not the least successful being *The Women of Scripture*, of which the tenth edition is now on my desk before me, and *Moral Heroism*, which, I have been told, suggested to the late Dr. Samuel Smiles his *Self Help* and *Duty*.

I was born in 1843, and was educated in the north of France and in Germany. I remember, with not a little pride, that in France I took the first French prize from the French boys, after a very keen "international competition."

My earliest days of business were spent in the offices of a distinguished firm of parliamentary agents at Westminster. I became, after several years of hard subordinate work, the managing clerk to another very enterprising firm, and ultimately the junior partner of a third. I was one of the original Directors of the Lands Allotment Company, Limited, and the Liberator Building Society. On the unexpected occurrence in the year 1870 of a vacancy in the secretariate of those undertakings I was pressed by my co-directors to accept the post of Managing Director. The proposal was in no way suggested or sought by me, and in fact it took me quite by surprise. I agreed after a good deal of hesitation. My acceptance involved the abandonment of my profession and my entering on a totally different sphere of work to that in which I had been trained. I may add that I was not influenced by mercenary motives, for I stipulated that my remuneration should be largely dependent on ultimate success; and, in consequence, the change entailed upon me for the first year or two a considerable diminution of income. Both undertakings were very successful under my management, and I fully shared in their prosperity. I remember that at the conclusion of one

exhaustive audit the auditors spontaneously recommended the Boards of Directors to recognize my services by a considerable increase in my salaries. I lived in Croydon, and took an active part in its local affairs, and was for many years a prominent member of the Croydon School Board.

In 1880 I succeeded the late Sir Robert Peel as member for Tamworth, having had the exceptional honour of defeating a brewer, the late Mr. Worthington, in a district which was then considered a stronghold of the brewing interest, the late Mr. Hamar Bass, the second son of the head of the great firm of Bass and Co., being my colleague.

In the summer of 1883 I was elected the first Mayor of Croydon, although I was not even a member of the corporation. I was re-elected in the following November, and thus retained that position in all for sixteen or seventeen months. It will always be a matter of pride to me that I took an active part in the inauguration of that most successful and well-ordered municipality.

When Tamworth was disfranchised, and Croydon constituted a parliamentary borough, by the Act of 1885, I was pressed by the leaders of my party to fight the new constituency, as being the only Liberal who had a chance of winning the seat. I consented, though I had no great hope of success, and I declined in consequence one or two invitations to stand for what were considered (as indeed they proved to be) safe Midland constituencies. I was defeated by Mr. (now Mr. Justice) Grantham, who had been for years my colleague on the Croydon School Board, and with whom, in spite of very wide political differences, I had always been on terms of mutual good feeling and respect. When Mr. Grantham was soon afterwards raised to the Bench he paid me the distinguished honour of sending me his photograph in his judge's robes, with an autograph

inscription on the back, stating that it was "to an honourable opponent."

I was out of Parliament for some years, but in 1889 was returned unopposed at a by-election for Burnley, and at the subsequent General Election in 1892 I retained the seat by a majority of more than double that which has ever been secured before or since by any candidate at Burnley. I had for some years previously considered myself (and not without reason) to be in a position so financially assured as to justify my enjoying the amenities of the world, a position which I had earned by very strenuous labour.

Some time after my election for Tamworth I relinquished the management and afterwards my directorate of the Liberator Building Society. This was, of course, years before its collapse, a fact which has never been adequately recognized, though the charges on which I was tried and convicted had nothing to do with that Society. I had also taken an active part in the promotion and management of several important undertakings which were in no way involved in the Liberator smash, and which are still flourishing.

I lived at No. 4, Marlborough Gate, which I had taken when, after the marriage of my daughter, I left Croydon in 1887. I had also bought at auction in the open market a moderate-sized estate at Burcot, in Oxfordshire, on the banks of the Thames. It was an interesting, unpretentious, old-fashioned place of great antiquity. I made it my hobby to improve the estate, and to be, what I was described as being, "an improving landlord." I pulled down ruthlessly the highly picturesque and frightfully unhealthy thatched cottages, replacing them by well-built, comfortable dwellings, and I gave them good water, excellent sanitation, and a garden of a quarter of an acre.

I remember that an American lady, the wife of a highly-esteemed clergyman in the district, one day deplored the disappearance of the old buildings. I reminded her that cottages were primarily meant to be lived in, not to be looked at, and she reluctantly admitted, as I did myself, the wisdom of the change. I established and maintained a Village Institute or Club, which I encouraged the villagers to manage for themselves. I provided two recreation grounds, in order to remove the anomaly, which I hated, of children and youths in country districts having nowhere but the high road and the grass roadsides to play upon. I provided allotment ground at rentals which were considered light by the labourers, but which I found paid me very well indeed. I mention these facts, not by way of self-laudation, but as showing that I honestly tried to practise the radical doctrines which I professed. Any person who takes the trouble to visit the neighbourhood can ascertain the estimation in which, I am glad to learn, I am still held there.

I suppose no person in England had less notion of the dark financial clouds that were about to pass over my head, and over that of many another man of wealth and many a small investor, at that juncture. I had had, of course, the experience of other men of business; I had had ups and downs; but, on the whole, I had no reason to doubt that the companies with which my name has been connected, and which have been called "The Balfour Group," would survive the financial difficulties and suspicion created by the forced liquidation of some of the largest banking houses in the world.

I have no wish to mention names, or to recall incidents of a most trying period, but 1892 was a fatal year for two of the greatest financial firms in the country, and my companies suffered from the general mistrust which these

disasters created, a mistrust manifested and accentuated by the abrupt and almost total stoppage of their investment income. The crash came suddenly, and from that moment I resolved to devote my life to the task of repairing the disaster by husbanding the resources and nursing the magnificent properties in which the Liberator group were interested. I decided to resign my seat in Parliament, to give up all my other directorates, and to make this the business of my life. Whether I should have succeeded or not I cannot say. I think I might, but I was never allowed to try. I was rebuffed and thwarted at every turn by the predatory hosts who were determined to drive the companies into liquidation, to slaughter their assets, and to batten on the costs. Should the history of that liquidation ever be written, it will reveal a recklessness in dealing with the assets which was only surpassed by the recklessness of assertion and innuendo which was part of the deliberate policy of the wreckers. The investors in the various undertakings were lured into acquiescence by outrageous denunciations of the directors, and by threats of the speedy and summary vengeance which would overtake them. Under these circumstances, my hands were tied. I was never consulted, and was reduced to a perfectly helpless condition. I could but wait on the course of events.

It was at Burcot one morning that I received a letter calling me urgently to London. I arrived, little knowing what strange experiences were before me. I made my way, as suggested, to a famous legal firm, where I was immediately told that, in the opinion of one of the partners—who was supposed to be among the shrewdest men in the City of London—I must leave England that very day, because he was convinced, from what he knew of the talk in the offices of the official liquidator, that it

was intended to leave no stone unturned to secure my prosecution and conviction. He said that in his opinion it was impossible that I could obtain a fair trial in view of the natural indignation of the thousands of small investors who had, together with myself, lost their all. It is my firm and convinced belief that the undertakings might have weathered the storm, had the same consideration, forbearance and help been given to them as to another great financial concern.

I have no wish to recapitulate the public works in which I had had a part, but I would ask any unprejudiced person to glance at the great suburban estates, which had been covered by well-designed, well-built, and well-appointed houses; at Whitehall Court—the pioneer of the fashionable flat system of London—the Hotel Cecil, Hotel Victoria, Albert Mansions, Carlyle Mansions, and above all, the gigantic works at Bembridge, Isle of Wight, which latter will, I hope, be always an abiding memorial of my enterprise. I can claim to have been the moving spirit in the reclamation from the sea of over 800 acres of ugly, useless mud-banks, which were covered by the tide twice every twenty-four hours, but which are now valuable grazing land; but, as I have already stated, I will not delay the reader with a list of these and other works in many parts of the country.

I believe that time, which has already vastly affected the minds of some who were bitterly hostile to me, will further demonstrate that I was as deeply misused by circumstances as any who suffered with me. I would like to state here that I never withdrew one farthing from any of the companies.

I emphasize the point because, despite the abominable lies that have been spread with regard to a considerable fortune which I was said to have taken with me to South

America, it is known by those dear to me, and by all who know the facts, that I had not withdrawn one penny from the companies, so that when the crash came I was practically penniless, and my fortune, as much as the savings of the humblest of their investors, was swallowed up by the sharks who infest the sea of bankruptcy.

On that dark December morning when I reached London from my country-seat, I little knew that within twenty-four hours I should be leaving England a fugitive, and I would like to repeat what was so well said for me by my counsel, Mr. John O'Connor, at my trial, that I never regretted any incident of my business life more than that unnecessary and damning flight. It was no secret at the time that I went against my own wish, and that I acted upon what I believed was the best legal opinion in England. I may also fairly plead that I had passed through months of terrible strain and excitement, of unremitting and unsuccessful labour such as few men would have survived. I am not ashamed to own that I was broken down in mind and body. Much as I deplore having left England, I honestly believe that my departure saved my life.

On the morning of the 18th of December, 1892, I left my rooms at Whitehall Court, caught the ordinary eleven o'clock train, *viâ* Calais to Basle, and so on to Genoa; thence I left by steamer for Buenos Aires, and had arrived there some time before my absence from England was known.

## CHAPTER II

### IN ARGENTINE. ARREST AND JOURNEY TO ENGLAND

I DO not propose here to enter into an account of the long and wearisome fight for my extradition, which took place between the British Government and the Argentine Republic. For the best part of a year I remained at a place called Salta, free from observation or molestation.

On the 20th of January, 1894, I was suddenly arrested by the provincial authorities. Then for another year I was kept in a state of semi, but very irksome, imprisonment, amid deep mental anxiety. The most distinguished counsel in the Argentine Republic were of the opinion, which they published in the Press, that I could not be legally extradited, and on their advice and the advice of my friends in England, I was urged not to return, which I proposed more than once to do.

The case was fought through all the Argentine courts, to the great advantage of the lawyers and the absorption of every farthing of the funds which my friends had sent me from England. I could at any time have escaped with the assistance and connivance of the provincial authorities, by payment of a thousand pounds. Indeed, more than one offer of that kind was made to me. One of these proposals (all of them turned on the payment of a thousand pounds to a certain notability) was as follows:—On a certain day a particular soldier, a notorious malefactor, was

to be posted on sentry duty. I was to be provided by my adviser with a revolver, with which I was to shoot the unfortunate wretch. I had ample opportunities for doing so. I was to be tried for killing him, and even to be convicted. I should then receive a sentence of six years, the longest term of imprisonment in the code of that particular State, with the result that the British authorities would not be able to obtain possession of my person for that period. I was to remain comfortably in prison until the matter had quietened down in England, when I should be released, and could resume my ordinary life in absolute safety.

That was one plan. On my expressing horror at the suggestion, the negotiating official, who was somewhat surprised and disappointed at my delicacy, volunteered the following alternative :—"I will arrange," he said, "for your prison to be broken into; there shall be a carriage and pair waiting for you at the end of the street, you shall be hurried off in the night to a certain estate in the Grand Chaco, where you can enjoy yourself to your heart's content. There is plenty of sport, a nice library, and absolute seclusion. Meantime, I will pretend to scour the country after you, and when the clamour for you has subsided a little, you can retire to some neighbouring republic in peace." Both these plans were, no doubt, quite feasible, but I need scarcely say that I rejected them, and many others.

Matters reached a crisis in April 1895, when I was informed that the famous detective Froest had arrived from England, had come up to Salta, a two days' journey from the coast, and that I was to be escorted—but not in his custody—to Buenos Aires, and there handed over to him, when actually on board a British steamer. On that ship, the *Tartar Prince*, I encountered the first of the long series of personal degradations which embittered my life as a prisoner.

I was taken to the captain's cabin, and in the presence of some attachés from the Embassy and other loafers whom I did not know, was told to strip myself as a preliminary to being searched. To that intolerable suggestion I replied, "If you want to take my clothes off here, I shall not resist you, but I shall not assist you, and I shall report the matter immediately on my return." Thereupon, as they saw I was resolute, they thought better of the proposal, and were content to go through the formality of searching me with my clothes on, afterwards tearing by main force the lining from my hat, to see, I suppose, whether it concealed any poison.

The great detective was not at all an unkindly man, but he had come from England with the fixed impression in his mind, amounting to an absolute obsession, that I was bent on committing suicide. It was one of the many wreckers' rumours started in London with the intention of prejudicing me. The idea was a foolish one, for if I had desired thus to end my days, I could have done so at any time in South America, in prison or out of it.

Moreover, closely as Mr. Froest might have watched me in my short sixty minutes on deck each day, I could—unless actually manacled—have jumped overboard. Nevertheless, Mr. Froest, who I should not say was a detective of the order of Vidocq, could not drive from his brain the idea that he might arrive in England minus his famous prisoner. For this reason I was kept for twenty-three hours per diem in a locked cabin, and was allowed but one hour on deck. I was not permitted to enter the public dining-room. My meals were brought to me by Mr. Froest himself, after the rest of the passengers had fed.

Some of the passengers came to my cabin and played chess with me, and otherwise tried to amuse me, always,

of course, in the presence of Mr. Froest. My relations with my keeper were those of armed neutrality, but with excellent feeling between us. I knew that he was conscientiously performing his duty as he understood it, and he endeavoured to make things as pleasant as he could for me, subject always to his extraordinary fear that I should elude him by some means of self-inflicted death.

We had a very smooth, though for me terribly anxious, voyage. There was scarcely a ripple between Buenos Aires and Southampton, and my sea imprisonment lasted exactly one month and a day. Our arrival must have been signalled from some point, for as soon as we were off Cowes, a steam launch came alongside, and I was hurried on deck, amidst the sympathetic cheers and good wishes of my fellow-passengers, who gathered on the deck to wish me farewell. There was a fainting and shrieking scene by one of the ladies, who was an absolute stranger to me. As the launch sheered off the captain and crew of the *Tartar Prince* shouted, "Good luck to you, old man."

On the launch I found several additional detectives. We hastened up Southampton Water, pursued by a tug containing a whole army of Press-men. But we had a faster boat, and the reporters were badly beaten. We dodged into the docks at Southampton by a private entrance, and landing at once I was hurried into a railway carriage. On reaching town I was taken in a four-wheeled cab from Vauxhall—thus avoiding the reporters, who, owl-like, were waiting at Waterloo—to Bow Street, where for the first time in my life I stood within a dock.

The proceedings were very formal, and occupied but a few minutes, during which time I was greatly supported amidst my dismal forebodings and sufferings by the chivalrous friendship and zealous legal assistance of my old and valued friend, Mr. John O'Connor, M.P. He had

hurried to Bow Street. He brought me word of my friends. In spite of our dismal surroundings and anxious forebodings, it was, I am sure, a pleasure to both of us to meet again.

I left Bow Street police-court, and was ushered into a prison van. It is a long, omnibus-shaped vehicle, entered at the back, and divided into minute cupboards or compartments.

Picture my feelings. I had had a day of intense excitement and emotion; the arrival at dawn at Southampton; the detectives in their launch; the escape from the newspaper people; the rapid journey through the green fields and landscapes of England, looking then at their very best in all the freshness and brightness of early spring; the cab journey from Vauxhall; the newspaper placards, with the words, "ARRIVAL OF JABEZ BALFOUR"; the first appearance in the dock; the crowded court, and the absence of any friend save Mr. O'Connor; and then the Black Maria!

I found that the vehicle was packed with the refuse of the London police-courts. They apparently knew each other very well, and were on most excellent terms of friendship with their guardian, who walked up and down the corridor, and chaffed them unmercifully, especially the female prisoners. I was amazed at the terms of jaunty familiarity which existed between the prisoners and the officers of the law, and for the first time I became acquainted with the slang of prison life, which I found to be full of words which are not in the standard Slang Dictionary, and for which I cannot even now attribute any reasonable origin.

I shall never forget that ride through London. It was the last stage in a long and very distressing journey from the slopes of the Andes to the banks of the Thames. I

had been a prisoner in trains in South America; on an ocean steamboat; in another train in England; in a four-wheeled cab, and in a police-court; but the ignominy and humiliation of that ride from Bow Street to Holloway, accompanied by the oaths and obscenities of my fellow-passengers, are stamped indelibly on my brain. It is, I suppose, a drive of some half-hour's duration. I tried to trace in my mind the direction we were taking, but the sensation of being carried along without knowing or being able to see anything is bewildering to the last degree.

I imagine that there was no more gloomy being in London on that afternoon than I, and my spirits on entering the great gates cannot be described. There is, indeed, nothing so convincing of the fact that one is really a prisoner as travelling in a prison van. There is a sensation almost of suffocation in the tiny closet in which one is confined, and to a man of refinement the sudden association, on terms of equality, for the first time in his life, with the noisy and ribald dregs of criminal and outcast London is an experience calculated to beget despair in the most sanguine mind. I have been through many more troubles since, but I shall never forget that disgusting ride.

## CHAPTER III

### HOLLOWAY

AT Holloway things were not so bad as I expected. At that time it was a place of detention for all classes of prisoners awaiting trial. It was there that I had my first experience of the extraordinary kindness towards prisoners that is shown by most prison officials.

I was not confined in an ordinary cell at Holloway, but was allowed to rent a room-cell. On my arrival the Governor met me, and I was taken into an apartment where particulars of my name, height, weight, age, and appearance were carefully noted. I was told that I could order what I chose to eat and drink from outside (provided, of course, that I could pay for it), but I was not allowed to smoke; and, in fact, from that day forward I never tasted tobacco in any form until I was offered a cigar a day or two after my release. As the subject of tobacco in prison is in more senses than one a burning question, I am bound to admit that I did not miss tobacco half as much as I had thought I should. I had been a rather heavy smoker from my youth, and in the long hours of waiting in South America, where every one, from a baby upwards, had a cigarette in his mouth all day, I had naturally smoked much. In fact, I smoked there even more than I did in England. On the home voyage—and what a home-coming!—I found a good deal

of physical comfort in my pipe, but the very day I entered Holloway I gave up smoking, and I cannot say that I felt it a privation.

Yet I had many opportunities of smoking afterwards in the long hours of waiting at the Law Courts during my trial. Some years later I came up to London to give evidence (in 1898), and might doubtless have smoked had I wished, but I did not make the attempt. What I really missed more than anything else in prison was the morning tub. That, fortunately, I was not deprived of at Holloway, but the sufferings I experienced at first in penal servitude from the absence of my daily bath were a thousandfold more keenly felt than the loss of my much-loved pipe.

But to describe my quarters at Holloway. I was escorted by a warder, dressed in a dark blue uniform, with a curious headgear, which is a cross between the French military "képi" and the peaked cap of the ordinary commissionaire in the London streets. It is a peculiar-looking cap, and I hope I may never see it again. Round his waist the warder wore a chain, with keys attached, and on his collar there were letters and numbers. It was my first acquaintance with the warder, or "screw," as he is called, not only by prisoners but among warders themselves. I have known more than one governor who has referred to "my screws." The origin of the term no one seems able to explain.

Of the character of the "screw" I shall have much to say. There are "screws" and "screws," just as there are stockbrokers and stockbrokers. But in the main (I speak of them as I found them), they are excellent men, doing their very difficult and ill-paid work as well as any other class of public servants, and this remark particularly applies to the younger generation of prison officials. The

warder I first came in contact with on my first night's imprisonment in England was a man of this stamp. He was courtesy and kindness itself.

The windows of the room which I rented were heavily barred, the room itself was barely, but not uncomfortably furnished. There are, I dare say, many worse at fashionable watering places. I had a decent bed, and was allowed to pay a prisoner, who was detained for debt, sixpence a day, which he was very glad to earn, to clean out my room and make my bed. All prisoners who can afford it are permitted at Holloway to purchase their own food, which comes from some restaurant or eating-house outside. I cannot speak with especial favour of the *cuisine* of the particular establishment at which I dealt. There were times when I almost thought I should have preferred the regulation prison diet. To dine in the dog days off a plate of very fat hot roast pork, while waiting for what my friends informed me would be a very long sentence, is not a form of entertainment that I wish to repeat. I used to leave my plate on my window sill, and its contents were greedily consumed by one or two uncommonly hungry urchins who were detained at Holloway on some trifling charge. I envied those boys their appetites.

The summer of 1895 was as fine a summer as I can recollect. My own feelings while I remained at Holloway, revolving in my mind, not only hourly, but every minute, the various points which my advisers informed me would be brought against me, the occasional inevitable differences of opinion among my advisers, and, above all, the loss of liberty, made up a load of misery that I cannot describe. I felt it so much, indeed, that, strange as it may appear, I at last looked forward to my trial, however it might end, as the termination of a period of mental distress and worry such as few human beings ever endured. In

order to realize my condition and the way I regarded it, let it be remembered that I had been suddenly hurled from a position of some distinction among my countrymen; from the status of a member of Parliament to that of a very unwilling fugitive; that I had endured great mental suffering in South America, among a people whose language I did not understand; that I had undergone the strange experience of imprisonment on board ship, and had now returned to London to spend a long, weary summer and autumn at Holloway, full of apprehension and suspense.

There was little to relieve the monotony of life there. Now and then a fresh and new anxiety was introduced, but I cannot say that beyond the cheery and genial meetings with my counsel, Mr. O'Connor, there came any ray of sunshine into my life, except (and it is a very large exception) the visits of friends who, knowing the real facts, stood by me then, as they have stood by me ever since. These were friends indeed.

Holloway did not contain any fellow-prisoners of interest. During the daily exercise, of which the Governor kindly allowed me as much as I chose, I encountered one or two men whom I had heard of in previous years, including a well-known solicitor, who had gone to the dogs through drink.

I found at Holloway that the gentlemen known as "visiting-magistrates" arrogated to themselves a strange and totally unwarranted patronage of the Press, and it may be so still at Brixton, which has now replaced Holloway as the place of detention for prisoners awaiting trial. If a particular newspaper had chanced to injure their susceptibilities at any time, they placed it upon an index, and it was not allowed to enter the prison.

Personally, I think that no such restrictions should be placed upon prisoners awaiting trial. Any limitation other

than what is necessary to secure a prisoner's safe custody and to prevent him from committing suicide is very unfair, and is, or ought to be, illegal. The prisoner should be allowed to read what he likes, to eat what he likes, and, if he wishes, to smoke. Many of those who go through this ordeal of detention are acquitted in the long run. What right, then, has the State to inflict punishment, for punishment it is, upon innocent men? According to the English maxim (although this is one of our many national hypocrisies), "a man is to be deemed innocent until he is found guilty."

After an active career in business and politics, it may be assumed that the art of killing time is not quickly acquired. The mind is not easily trained to change the habits of a lifetime. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that the time at Holloway hung heavily on my hands, though many hours were naturally spent in the preparation of my defence. At Holloway prisoners on remand awaiting trial are allowed every opportunity of seeing their legal advisers, and such interviews, at any rate so far as I was concerned, took place in absolute privacy. Nor was I molested in my intercourse with friends. The warders flitted about the open door, but that was all.

Another ordeal which I was beginning to pass through related to the worth or worthlessness of human friendships. Held up to obloquy for more than two years by the Press, deserted and assailed by some whom I had actually nourished, men who owed to me everything they possessed, and who had made for themselves positions of wealth and comfort by my countenance and favour, it was now my lot to find out among a very large acquaintance who would and would not stand by me. I appealed to no one. Some upon whom I confidently relied I never heard from. Others from whom I expected nothing stuck to me through thick

and thin with unfailing sympathy and fidelity. Many who had depended upon my assistance in business, who owed, as I have said, everything in life to me, did not take the trouble to communicate with me, and one or two were ostentatiously assisting the prosecution. In an affair of this kind, with the majority of human beings, it is a case of *sauve qui peut*, and the devil take the hindermost. At that time I was certainly the hindermost.

Nevertheless, there stood true to me many people, some in considerable, some in humble positions, and such of them as are still alive have welcomed me with kindness and confidence on my restoration to freedom. So I was not without comforters in my prison at Holloway. Ministers of religion, lawyers, and City men came from time to time to see me, and of course the members of my own domestic circle, who knew me best, were unfaltering in their kindness.

The days wore wearily on during that beautiful summer of 1895. I should have been tried in June at the Central Criminal Court, but the then Attorney-General, Sir Robert Reid, now Lord Loreburn, exercised his prerogative of moving the case to the High Court of Justice. I was, therefore, spared the Old Bailey, although I should undoubtedly have benefited had the trial taken place there. Some of the best legal experts have since assured me that my sentence would have been a much lighter one had I been tried at Newgate.

In June 1895 Lord Rosebery's Government was defeated on the cordite question, and a General Election following, it was represented to me that it would be a very great inconvenience to the counsel who were retained to prosecute me if my trial took place (as it was arranged to take place) during, or immediately after, the General Election; whereupon I at once consented to its postponement until after the Long Vacation. I did this voluntarily,

though it of course prolonged my period of imprisonment. As the event showed, had I been tried in June and had I even received the same sentence as was pronounced upon me in November, I should have been liberated at least four months earlier than I was. A heavy penalty to pay for an act of unnecessary courtesy. I say unnecessary, for had I resisted the postponement, my trial, seeing that I was not on bail, would not have been postponed.

I was doomed, therefore, by my own voluntary act, to another dreary three months, the three months of the year when I had hitherto been sharing the joys of the country and of travel with my children, and I committed what I now know to have been an act of quixotic folly. For, with the exception of thirty-six days, no allowance whatever was made to me in the calculation of my term of penal servitude, although these facts were laid before the late Government by my son, in a petition to the Home Secretary, which was supported by members on both sides of the House of Commons.

What would have happened had I been tried at the Old Bailey in June is this. My sentence would have run from the date in June when the Grand Jury found a true bill against me. As it was, it did not commence to run until I was sentenced at the end of November, over five months later. It may be said that that is not a very great grievance. I ask any person to imagine what an extra 150 days of imprisonment means. As a matter of fact, those first seven months at Holloway were far more distressing than the last seven months at Parkhurst. At Holloway I was in suspense and anxiety, undergoing all the first sensations only to be understood by a ruined man, the butt of enemies and false friends, while at Parkhurst I had won the respect and confidence of all the prison authorities, was engaged in useful work, and was looking forward to an early release.

## CHAPTER IV

### TRIAL AND SENTENCE

SUMMER passed into autumn, autumn almost into winter, before the fateful morning came when I emerged once more into the world, this time in a four-wheeled cab. Thus, accompanied by two warders, I was driven from Holloway to the Law Courts, and smuggled along corridors, into a waiting-room adjoining the court. The case had aroused enormous interest. (I suppose I was the most discussed and best abused man in the United Kingdom.) There was always a crowd to see my arrival and departure, but there were no manifestations of hostility or otherwise. On one occasion, however, I remember (and it must be understood that the two trials occupied many days), a strange, wild-looking creature followed so closely behind me as I left the court, that I thought he was about to attack me. I turned sharply round and faced him, and asked what he wanted, when he merely touched his hat, said nothing, and slunk furtively away.

I was considerably amused by the various sketches that appeared of me in the newspapers during my trial. It was my first experience of the new journalism, but I cannot congratulate the papers on the accuracy of the likenesses. Since then the camera has stepped into court. The result may not be so flattering, but it is certainly more exact. During the most solemn periods of the trial, when I needed all my power of self-command not to break

down absolutely, I was conscious of artists on my right and left sketching me assiduously.

I was opposed by several of the most eminent counsel in England. Sir Richard Webster, the present Lord Chief Justice of England; Sir Robert Reid, the present Lord Chancellor; Mr. (now Mr. Justice) Sutton, Mr. Gill, K.C., Mr. Avory, K.C., and others. On my side I had only two—my loyal friend, Mr. John O'Connor, and Mr. Swanson. It was a hopeless struggle from the outset, and I knew it to be so. It was represented to me that if I would save trouble and plead guilty I should receive a *quid pro quo* in the sentence, but I scouted the suggestion, stating that I would rather suffer imprisonment for life than admit the truth of the charges preferred against me, and now, even after all the suffering I endured during my long incarceration, I rejoice unhesitatingly in that decision.

Sir Richard Webster dominated that court as he has many others. I make no complaint against him of his conduct at the trial. Had I possessed his legal ability, and been in his position, doubtless I should have done as he did. He was not unduly vindictive or discourteous. He pressed one or two points, as I thought, rather unfairly, but I suppose that is the way of prosecutions and that my impression is the general opinion of prisoners. I had known his father intimately in the way of business. He had even forgotten that I had occupied offices in his father's chambers at Westminster. To such an extent did he rule the court that, amidst my dire peril, I noticed with some amusement that the learned Judge hesitated even to order a window to be opened or closed without Sir Richard's consent. At one time, when we insisted upon a witness being called whom Sir Richard very wisely wished kept out of the box, the learned Judge made a profuse apology to him, saying that he was "compelled"

to accede to our demand. The ordinary position of judge and counsel seemed to be reversed, and I need scarcely say what effect that state of affairs must have had on the minds of the jury.

As to the merits of trial by jury, I presume I am now somewhat of a biassed witness. The special juries of the County of Middlesex by whom I was convicted certainly did not impress me. It would have been difficult to find any twelve men apparently less able to master the vast amount of complicated figures which were put before them. An instance of the stupidity of one of them, which I have often mentioned to lawyers at Parkhurst (in that particular penal settlement there is a large legal population, with whom I became acquainted), was always received by them with roars of laughter, even amid their gloomy surroundings. There were two indictments upon which I was tried. The first indictment took the longest time, and on the jury returning their verdict, and receiving the conventional compliments of the Judge, they were excused from further attendance. A new jury was empanelled to try the second indictment. The next morning, before the new jury had been sworn, we were surprised to observe one of the former jurymen waiting placidly in the jury-box. An official of the court asked him what he was doing there. He replied that he had come to continue his services. He had not realized that he had already given his verdict! He was assured by the officials that he had done all that was required of him, and he reluctantly and doubtfully retired.

I have read many descriptions of prisoners on trial, as I suppose every one has done at some time or other. It is curious to notice the differences of newspaper opinion. Every morning before leaving Holloway, where I was taken every evening at the conclusion of the day's proceedings, I

would rapidly glance through the papers, and even in those moments of intense anxiety could not repress a smile at the variety of their descriptions. According to some, I was fat, florid, and self-contented. To others, I was anxious and obviously over-strained. "Callous" was the most frequent word, simply because I endeavoured to refrain from manifesting outward signs of emotion. As a matter of fact, supreme anxiety has the effect on some brains—certainly on mine—of quieting and clearing the mind and of intensifying its attention. I can honestly affirm that while I was most painfully interested in all the proceedings of the actual trial, I did not miss, I suppose, any humorous incident, of which there were not a few.

As day after day passed by, the intolerable length of the trial so told upon me that I began to imagine that it was going on for ever, and that I had never lived any other kind of life. The long days in the stuffy court, the hurried luncheon hour, the crowds of eager spectators, the comforting words of my friend, Mr. O'Connor, the irritation engendered by the scrutiny of many eyes all day long, the absolute knowledge that in the then state of public feeling and the constitution of the court the result was a foregone conclusion, made me long for my sentence. At any rate, I should then know the worst, and should, perhaps, recover a little peace of mind. I might not have taken that view, perhaps, had I realized the meaning of penal servitude, and the brain-torture it inflicts upon educated prisoners.

But even my trial could not go on for ever. The case being divided into two indictments, and the Judge having deferred sentence until the end of the second trial, I had the further additional experience of having to fight the second case, knowing all the time that I was already a condemned man with regard to the first one. The first

verdict was delivered on November 20, and the second late in the evening of the 27th, whereupon the Judge, with cruel deliberation, I think, deferred sentence until the following morning. I did not close my eyes that night for one minute, and I thought that the dull winter dawn would never come. I was treated with particular kindness that morning by all the officials at Holloway, from the Governor downwards. Their sympathy as the case went on, as they got to know me and to form their own opinions of my character, had increased day by day, and I have since heard from fellow-prisoners at Parkhurst, who have passed through the same ordeal at Holloway, that some officials there invariably spoke of me afterwards as "poor Balfour."

Daylight came at length. I left Holloway with my food untouched, took what I little knew was to be my last glance at a newspaper for many years, entered the same four-wheeler (the driver appeared to be a kind of retainer of the place, knowing full well all the back doors of all the courts in London, and how to dodge the reporters), and once more, and for the last time, entered the gloomy waiting-room at the Law Courts.

After a very long delay—I do not know the cause—I was summoned into the court. It was packed like a theatre on Boxing Night, and I noticed many familiar faces. Some, I suppose, who had gathered together there had never been in a court of law before. They had hurried from the West End and from the City to be present at this, the last act, in a most eventful drama. Some of them I had known under very different circumstances. Many of them had broken bread at my table. Some were enemies; not a few, thank God, were friends. Without any delay I was ordered to stand up with my co-defendants in the first trial. I omit the mention of all names. The Judge there-

upon delivered a speech, sentencing one prisoner to four months' hard labour, another—who had been convicted on precisely the same counts in the first indictment as myself—to nine months', and me to seven years' penal servitude in respect of each indictment, making fourteen years in all.

Ordinary words cannot describe the feelings of a man in my position. It seemed then the end of everything. One's whole life flashes across one's brain in a second—childhood, youth, earliest ambition, family life, children, success, failure, ruin and—fourteen years' penal servitude! The sentence was so colossal that I quite failed to realize it, and at one moment my brain seemed to regard it almost as a gigantic and absurd joke. Some friendly hands were thrust forward to bid me good-bye. I was led, not knowing whither, or how I went, to a waiting-room beneath the court, and there was kept for a very long and wearisome period, until the learned Judge had found time to sign the documents of committal. There never was a more deliberate Judge than mine. Even at such a time there were humorous incidents. When the sentence was delivered, my counsel, Mr. O'Connor ("Long John," as he was known in the House of Commons in my days), suddenly, to my surprise, bolted out of court, overcome, as I supposed, with emotion, as indeed he was. A few minutes later, he bounded into the waiting-room, with a pint bottle of champagne in one hand, and sandwiches and cakes, and I know not what else besides, in the other. He would not allow me to speak to him until I had made one of the most tremendous, mixed, and indigestible luncheons in my life—a luncheon which, coming on the top of great mental excitement, caused me a terrible headache, such as I remember even after the longest ten years on record. It should not be forgotten that I had eaten nothing for

nearly twenty-four hours, and had gone through the most terrible experience of my life.

I have a blurred recollection of shaking hands with friends and of a ride back to Holloway in the official cab. I remember trying to chat on indifferent subjects with the warders and watching the newspaper boys rushing through the streets with the placards, "Heavy Sentence on Balfour," and that was practically the end of my every-day life for ten years and five months. There was a slight interlude, a few days after, when I was provokingly brought up to the Central Criminal Court at the Old Bailey, to plead to an indictment, which to my great disappointment was not proceeded with, for it would have given me an opportunity of disproving many of the charges which had been alleged against me, an opportunity I had looked forward to and which I think ought not to have been denied me. But that comparatively minor trouble did not take place until December 9.

In the meanwhile I remained at Holloway in the somewhat anomalous position of a man who was a convict and yet awaiting a further trial. For that reason I was allowed to wear my ordinary clothes, and I was still, so far as appearance went, an ordinary every-day citizen. My hair was not cropped, nor did I endure the daily searchings which were about to become so unpleasant a feature of my life.

On the other hand, I was immediately put on the local prison (not convict) diet. My newspapers were stopped; the number of my books was reduced to that of the ordinary convict, and my hours of exercise curtailed. But I was treated with the greatest humanity by the Governor. Many of the officials, and, I am glad to say, thousands in the outside world, agreed that my sentence was a savage one.

It seemed at that period of my life that misfortune followed on misfortune. Before the abortive trial just referred to took place I had to wait from November 28 to December 9, and it was during those days that I began to realize the awful fate that lay before me, and from that period and for many years afterwards—in fact, up to two years ago—I was absolutely convinced that I should never live to see the outside world again. Had I foreseen the horrors of the living death awaiting me, I doubt whether my health would have held out. As it was, I grew extremely ill, and suffered from a strange and painful form of neuralgia, which, no doubt, was the result of the intense mental anxiety of the trial itself. I was provided with good medical attendance, and gradually the neuralgia disappeared. But pain, sleeplessness, and ill-health were nothing to the agony of mind at that period.

I saw one very faithful friend the day after my conviction. For the rest, I was absolutely cut off from the world. I was indeed a man lost. I cannot remember exactly how those days passed. I had already become accustomed to restrictions on my liberty. I had long ago come to the conclusion that, so far as I was concerned, life was over for me. I had grown used to the piling up of anxiety upon anxiety, trouble upon trouble, and the loss of sleep, appetite, hope and every other gift which makes life endurable. Somehow or other, I know not how, I dragged out those first few days, which were practically semi-penal servitude, in dreariness and misery. The routine was not the dreadful mechanical life I was afterwards to endure. I was treated with great forbearance by those around me. I was like a man waiting to embark on a long voyage from which he never expects to return. Those who rise each morning free men, enter upon the incidents of daily business life, its worries, its

amusements, its pleasant meetings with friends, and, above all, its abundant variety, cannot conceive the position of a man who is driven back upon nothing but his own mental resources, and has to use his brain as a time-killer. I have no wish to enlarge on my sufferings. I will only say that it took years to train my brain to the life, and that even then it was one continued agony.

After what seemed months or years, I know not which, the 9th of December arrived. Early on that morning—a dark, drizzly, foggy morning—I was told that I was wanted at the Old Bailey. I dressed myself, and was taken into a courtyard, where I found several other unfortunate beings awaiting the arrival of "Black Maria" to convey us to Newgate. They were quite a different class of prisoner from those who had accompanied me on my rides to and from Bow Street. They were a serious, anxious group—some of them were professional men, and others defaulting bank managers—men apparently of a superior class. They seemed to have become acquainted in the exercise yard, for they were discussing their various cases with a frankness and fulness which were new to me, and which would have been very instructive and indeed valuable to the juries who tried them.

The ponderous vehicle loomed through the fog, the warders assembled around us, and we passed one by one into the lumbering vehicle. The spring door was shut upon us, the warder took his place, and we moved off slowly, with all the sounds of freedom around us, through the busy, early morning streets. I could hear my companions, to whom I had been an object of great interest in the courtyard, discussing their cases still with wonderful frankness. One had been through the ordeal before, and was up to "the tricks of the trade," and he was offering suggestions and advice to the neophytes. He

also was on terms of easy friendship with the warder, who treated him more as a chum than as a prisoner.

It seems to be part of the etiquette in the handling of prisoners that they should be kept waiting as long as possible on every occasion. As we drove into the gloomy portals of Old Newgate, St. Paul's tolled out ten o'clock. We were taken out of Black Maria, and waited about the courtyard until we were handed one by one into cells. Years before that, at the height of my prosperity, it happened that I had called at Newgate to see an unfortunate prisoner who secured his acquittal through my evidence. I remember how on that occasion I had left the place with a shudder, little imagining that I should return to it crushed under the weight of one of the longest sentences ever given to a man who had not been convicted of felony.

As the courts were sitting, Old Newgate was thronged with prisoners. They and their friends hung about the corridors in the care of warders. There was a constant passing to and fro, shouting of names, and opening and slamming of cell doors as this prisoner or that was going forward to take his place in the dock. As events happened, I never stood in the dock at Newgate, for as soon as the court opened, counsel for the Treasury rose and stated that they did not intend to proceed with the indictment.

My journey and visit to Newgate had therefore been quite useless, but as the old-fashioned Holloway four-wheeler was not at hand, I was detained at Newgate until late in the day; indeed, until long after the courts had risen. Then there was again the same bustle throughout the prison. It had been for me a tedious day, though a slight change from Holloway, the busy movement and the going to and fro in the prison being a minute relief. I

endeavoured to persuade the chief warder to let me see a newspaper, but he would not.

Later in the evening we male prisoners who had started out from Holloway in the morning—those of us, that is to say, who had not escaped the meshes of the law—were assembled once more, this time in another and still more gloomy courtyard. I do not know the official name of the grim cemetery inside the walls of Old Newgate, in which the bodies of murderers were hastily thrown amid quicklime after the inquest which followed their execution, but it was in that especially gruesome sepulchre, that Campo Santo of crime, that we assembled, and gazed with horror on the initials of the culprits, with the dates of their interment, carved upon the walls. This horrible connecting passage between Newgate and the Old Bailey was known among prisoners as the Bird Cage Walk, on account of the iron *grille* overhead.

Strangely enough, with the exception of myself, the passengers for the Black Maria—"the Holloway 'bus," it was facetiously called—were more jocular than I expected. Judges and juries had perhaps lunched well that day, and sentences ruled light, for all had got off cheaper than they professed to expect, and were full of chaff and good humour.

As for me, I kept apart, for I was neither of their frame of mind nor situated as they were, and I am bound to say that prisoners and warders alike treated my unhappy position with respect and sympathy.

I have already said enough in these memoirs to prove that when a man gets really down in the world he touches a lode of human kindness which he cannot have anticipated from his bitter experiences in going down hill. When you are up in the world you are assailed by flattery and by envy. When you are going down, it is, as Josh Billings said: "When a man begins to go down hill, it seems as if the

declivity were especially greased for the occasion." When you get to the bottom, and the world is tired of jumping upon you, you are surprised to find that almost without exception, even among the roughest people and the most hardened criminals, the situation is softened by unexpected sympathy. I do not suppose there was a day at Holloway when in the exercise yard one or two men did not deliberately evade the prison rules, and come to me and whisper, "Cheer up, old man."

Again, we lumbered through the busy streets in the prison van. There was yet another delay before I became "V. 460" with broad arrows all over my clothes.

For reasons only known to the authorities I remained three days more at Holloway—that is, till the following Thursday, December 12.

I shall not forget that date to the end of my life, for it was the day I entered Wormwood Scrubbs, and my experience of penal servitude began.

## CHAPTER V

### WORMWOOD SCRUBBS

I HAD often noticed when travelling on the Great Western Railway, to and from my home in Oxfordshire, a curious pentagonal series of buildings about a mile off on the south side of the line, a short distance west of Paddington. I had not troubled to think what it was, and I dare say few of the thousands who pass there every day realize that so far as many London prisoners are concerned it is the appointed place of entrance to a course of penal servitude. That establishment is Wormwood Scrubbs. As "Calais" was written on the heart of Queen Mary, so I am sure is "Wormwood Scrubbs" stamped on the brain of every English convict who passes its portals for the first time.

It was the wet afternoon of a short December day, just when the world at large was beginning to make its Christmas preparations, that I entered its precincts.

A diminutive type of Black Maria started on its bi-weekly journey between the two prisons. In it there were, I found, some female prisoners—whether they were convicts or not I do not know. If they were specimens of the average lady criminal, I am glad I have been spared from their society, for more blasphemous and horrible language I never listened to, and the chaff which passed between them and the attendant warders defies narration. They seemed to be in a state of high spirits bordering on

hysteria. I venture to think, from what I have heard on very good authority, that in few matters is the difference of sex more plainly shown than in their attitude and deportment under penal servitude.

It is a long, long drive from Holloway to "The Scrubbs," as it is called, and it was dusk when I arrived there. There is always an immense amount of key-jangling at the entrance to his Majesty's convict establishments; a good deal of it I believe to be purely theatrical. I have always thought that the locking and counter-locking, the challenging and roll-calling are a good deal overdone, and are intended principally for the few curious people who take the trouble to visit our prisons. We drove up with the customary flourish, a great bell clanged, the doors of the vehicle were thrown open, and the ladies were taken I don't know where. The warder who accompanied us called out the number of prisoners with him to the warder waiting. "Nine, sir," and the other warder replied, "All correct." I was the only man, and it could be easily seen that I was regarded with much curiosity. I would like to say here that in a book which I read soon after my release, written by a well-known fellow-prisoner at Parkhurst, with whom I was on friendly terms, it is stated that a certain kind of warder delights in humiliating the gentleman prisoner. That was true in the early days of my imprisonment at Portland, but as far as my experience goes, it was certainly not so at Wormwood Scrubbs.

Of Portland I shall have a different tale to tell.

I was escorted pleasantly and amiably by a warder to what is known as the "reception hall." "Hall" is an extremely popular word among those who build and manage prisons, most of which are divided into separate "halls," or, in other words, into great brick barns filled with iron staircases, landings and cells.

I was asked if I possessed any valuables, but having been previously warned by my good friends the warders at Holloway that I should never see them again if I were so unwise as to take them to "The Scrubbs," I had already sent the few I had to my friends. I had been accompanied from Holloway by a document giving my height, weight, colour of eyes, and a variety of other personal details. The Bertillon system of thumb and finger print records was not, I believe, then practised. This document followed me from prison to prison. It also contained particulars of my sentence.

In the kindest and most courteous manner the warder asked whether I would like a shave. I hardly realized what he was doing; it was like the "watch the pretty dicky-bird" of the child's photographer. So pleasantly was it done that, but for the surroundings, I might have thought myself at a West End hairdresser's. Quite suddenly there appeared a person dressed in the most extraordinary garb I had ever seen outside a pantomime. It was my first close view of a convict.

The public does not sufficiently differentiate between local prisons and convict prisons. The local prisons are for those sentenced up to two years' hard labour, a sentence which is often described in the Press as the severest of all sentences. It may be so in the opinion of outsiders, but I have never met a prisoner who, given the choice of three years' penal servitude or two years' hard labour, would not have chosen the shorter sentence.

My convict barber advanced, appliances in hand. But first let me describe his costume. The whole clothes were of a peculiar kind of brown (which I have never seen outside a prison), profusely embellished with broad arrows. His hair was so cropped that he was almost as closely shaven as a Chinaman. A short jacket, ill-fitting knicker-

bockers, black stockings striped with red leather shoes. Whether he wore a shirt or not, I cannot say. I only know that personally I never wore a shirt in the daytime if I could help it, for I disliked wearing the same linen garment by day and night.

Not a very extraordinary costume, you may remark. It sounds more or less like a bicycle suit, but it is not. There is something about the whole cut of prison clothes which is seen nowhere else.

He was a familiar and friendly fellow, my first convict. He asked me the usual questions—the questions which I found one convict always first asks a new arrival in every prison—What is your name? What are you in for? How long have you got? I satisfied him as to these details as briefly as possible while he was proceeding with the task. I thought it better to humour him, as I was in his grip.

The shaving was performed with a curious instrument which I had never seen before. I expected to be shaved, for I knew that beards were not permitted in convict prisons, though they are allowed in local prisons. For the hair-cropping I was not prepared, nor did I know to what extent it had taken place till I put my hand to my head when the process was half finished, and felt that my head was already almost as smooth as a billiard ball. What kind of spectacle I presented I know not. There was, happily, no looking-glass in the prison.

Curiously enough, I never saw myself in a looking-glass from the moment I left my cell in Holloway, on December 14, 1895, until November 1, 1904—practically nine years. When I did see myself I started back, for I did not know my own face. It was one of the most amazing and terrifying experiences in my life. I had changed past recognition.

After the ceremony of shaving and hair-cutting was over

came another ordeal—the parting with my civilian costume and the attiring myself in the hideous garments which—in slightly various forms betokening different periods of servitude—I was to wear until April 14, 1906, with one curious and short intermission, which I shall refer to later on.

Even though I had grown accustomed to "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" and was prepared for this experience, this breaking with the old life by the casting away of its garments proved a greater trial than I anticipated.

I have often been asked what becomes of prisoners' effects, and in the course of the many inquiries that I made in my prison life, in view of this book, I was told that at that time the authorities appropriated these clothes, a contractor paying the Government two-and-sixpence a suit for good and bad alike. It appears that the Government actually appropriated this half-crown—a proceeding, of course, little short of theft. That system has recently been changed, and prisoners' effects are now, I believe, returned to their friends.

Slowly and sadly I followed the warder out of the reception hall, across a big courtyard into a vast building, as large as a good-sized railway station, one of the halls I have just spoken of, practically an immense human cage. Each tier of cells, denominated a "landing," abutting on a vacant space or well, is now-a-days screened or partitioned off from the landings above and below by wire network, to prevent prisoners throwing themselves over the railings down to the floor of the well—a form of suicide formerly not unknown. I was told that just before I got to Parkhurst, one of its miserable inmates had thus terminated his existence.

The cells at Wormwood Scrubbs are clean, large and well

lit, and the temperature is always maintained at a proper heat for the human body. The floors actually shine with cleanliness; in fact, the cells were scrubbed thrice a week. On one side of the cell stands the plank bed. Light is dimly admitted by a dull glass window, high up in the cell, the window, of course, being heavily barred. I shall have something more to say as to the folly and inhumanity of depriving prisoners of light, surely one of nature's most precious gifts.

On the walls were a set of prison rules, dealing with all matters of discipline, and another explaining the terms upon which prisoners might obtain by good conduct and industry a definite remission of their sentences. It was the latter set that I read with the greatest interest. These two sets of rules formed my only literature on the first night of my arrival.

I suppose at that time I knew as little about penal servitude as most people. I may, at most, have read in a magazine the conventional descriptions of our penal establishments, written by some casual visitor, without sufficient imagination to understand how differently penal servitude affects the educated and the uneducated man, and who had failed to notice what I was soon quick to perceive, that visitors to prisons are shown exactly what the officials desire them to see.

I observed in the door of the cell a small hole, a kind of "peep-hole," and from time to time I could see an eye applied thereto watching me closely. All that night, as I lay awake, turning restlessly on my narrow plank bed, it seemed to me that the unpleasant sense of being watched would prevent me ever sleeping at all in prison, but one gets used to that, as to almost everything else in life.

There had been accorded me, by the doctor's order, one privilege. I was excused from sleeping on the bare planks;

a thin mattress was provided, and I was very grateful for the comfort. As a matter of fact, I soon learned that the authorities were apprehensive as to my health. I had, of course, been far from well, mentally and physically, for many weeks. It was at Wormwood Scrubbs that I first realized and appreciated the humanity, vigilance, watchfulness and care of the medical officers.

The warder had been careful to explain to me the rules of cell life. At about five o'clock the last meal of the day is served. I was told that I must hand out my "pint" and tin plate when the door was opened by the warder. The pint is then filled with tea, and a small brown loaf, weighing eight ounces, is handed to the prisoner. (I ought to say that generally this is coarse but excellent bread.) Should a prisoner be ill, he touches a button, and the indicator outside the cell door drops down, thus calling the attention of the patrol. I may say that never in nearly 4000 nights of penal servitude did I ever disturb the night patrol. This I should think is what would be now termed a "record."

During my first night at "The Scrubbs" I did my best to map out my prison future. By a careful calculation, based upon the rules of remission for good conduct, I ascertained that by not losing a single mark I could be a free man on May 20, 1906. That is to say, in 3833 days. As my friends know, I am a sanguine man, and always look for the bright side of things. I had some hope that I might obtain some further remission of my sentence. This hope was greatly fanned by efforts made by many disinterested people outside, who felt that I had been over-punished even if I had been guilty of all the villainies attributed to me.

This hope often seemed about to be realized, but again and yet again it was dashed to the ground by circumstances, or

influences, which I was quite unable to understand. However, I planned that night that if I were permitted to live I would do my best not to lose a single mark, and, thank God, I succeeded. I had always in a faint way realized that many of the cruelties which are complained of by released prisoners had been in a great measure brought about by their own folly and misconduct. But, of course, I, at that time, was absolutely ignorant of the life before me. I had not even seen much of Wormwood Scrubbs, in which I was to spend nearly the first six months (which are always thought the worst six months). But then and there I planned this book, and I mentally resolved that its motto should be Burns' familiar lines: "A chiel 's amang you, taking notes, and, faith, he'll prent it."

I knew that on my release I should have to begin life again, and I resolved to make a study of prison life and prison ways from that moment. I determined to look on the bright side of everything, if I possibly could. If there were any humour to be discovered, I was determined to discover it; but, alas! any humour except ill-humour is very rare in prison. Such as I found I shall certainly endeavour to recall.

On the morning after arrival at Wormwood Scrubbs prisoners are taken to see the deputy-governor, who puts to them a number of formal questions, the most striking and obviously superfluous being, "Have you any money with you?" It seemed to me, I confess, rather an unnecessary stroke of official genius to ask a prisoner who had been divested of all his clothes, and who had been thoroughly searched, when the change was made, "Have you any money with you?" When afterwards I sought enlightenment from a principal warder as to why this question was put to me, he assured me that it was put solely in the interest of the prisoner himself, as a check

upon the warders. In the whole course of my long prison experience in five different prisons, I very rarely saw anything to justify the allegations one often hears about the dishonesty of warders. I believe that corrupt warders are much rarer than the public have been taught to believe. No doubt if one searches high and low, one may find wrongdoers among prison authorities as well as among other people. There are some ex-prison officials in gaol at the present time. I heard of one amusing case, where no less a personage than a governor had a heavy sentence for bigamy. He was not, I hope, placed under his own warders, but moved to another prison. We have all recently heard of a governor actually absconding with the prison cash, but it would be just as unjust to consider these incidents as typical of the higher officials as to suppose that the humbler warder is venal or dishonest. In my own personal knowledge I have only known of one such warder, and he, on being detected, was dismissed the service in a week. I shall refer to his case later on.

At the audience with the deputy-governor there was another "star" (that is to say, first offender), who spoke to me on our way back from the office to our cells. Judge of my astonishment when he asked me if it would soon be Christmas. I thought he was chaffing, but, as a matter of fact, he was a soldier, who had committed an offence in India and had been sentenced by court-martial and brought back to this country. He had lost all sense of the flight of time. This is by no means a unique case. There are unfortunates in our prisons who, under the present system, lose all sense of morals, time and truth, and who leave prison physically and morally worse than they entered it. This is one great blot upon our penal system about which I shall have much to say.

I have just said that I look out for humour. I found

some within a couple of days. One morning I heard a tremendous disturbance in one of the cells above mine; shrieking, swearing, and apparently fighting were going on. I asked the warder what the disturbance was about, and he calmly replied, "Oh, it's nothing; it is only a fellow who has done his time, and doesn't want to go."

It filled me with wonder and horror when I reflected what on earth the home life of such a man must be that he should thus prefer a gaol. Strange as it may seem, such cases are not unknown. On more than one occasion convicts have become so unmanned that they have dreaded release. They know that they have lost all touch with such friends as may be still living, as well as all ability to earn a livelihood, or to do any kind of hard work, and they actually petition the Home Office to allow them to remain. I myself actually knew of one such case.

I should say something here as to the labour which was given to me on my first admission to penal servitude, and the best way will be to narrate a typical day's life at "The Scrubbs." The season was, as before stated, winter. I may premise that I rarely slept much more than some two hours a night during the whole of my twelve years' imprisonment, in this country and South America, and many nights I did not sleep at all. This fact was so well known to many of the prison authorities with whom I came in contact in my various prisons that "How have you slept?" became quite their customary greeting to me.

I got no sleep at all on my first night at Wormwood Scrubbs. I could hear the warders in their "sneaks" (silent felt shoes with thin rubber soles) moving about, and now and again I endured the misery of knowing that the shield of the spy-hole was raised and that I was being carefully watched.

Night in prison, let me add by way of parenthesis, is an

awe-inspiring period. At "The Scrubbs," owing to the thickness of the walls and good building generally, a prisoner is not so painfully aware of the proximity of his fellow-sufferers as at Portland, where the cells are (or were) only separated by a thin plate of corrugated iron, but even at Wormwood Scrubbs it was a gruesome and not uncommon experience to hear the shrieking of some half-demented or conscience-stricken creature in a nightmare.

I always welcomed the coming of the morning, and never so much so as in these early days. To leave one's bed and pace the cell at night is a breach of discipline, involving loss of marks, and thereby increasing one's term of imprisonment, so that whether you wished or whether you did not, you were compelled to lie in bed from eight at night until the bell rang in the morning. Frankly speaking, I feel that I have had all the bed I need for the rest of my days.

At Wormwood Scrubbs the morning bell rang at six. The cells were lighted with a gas light outside, although some few had the luxury of a light inside. These latter cells were naturally much sought after, as the temperature was higher—a consideration in winter—and the light brighter.

At 6.30 a.m. another bell rang, and we were shortly afterwards paraded for exercise. It was my first experience of convict society. The exercise yard is marked out into a number of circular asphalt paths, and the first sight of the prisoners twisting and twining around these produces a most extraordinary effect. It is part and parcel of the system to reduce everything to the mechanical. There could be no harm in the men at exercise running round if they chose, for there is no possibility of escape. The warders are present in force, and as for escape from "The Scrubbs," that is impossible under any circumstances.

"Old lags" have acquired the habit of talking from the sides of their mouths, and carrying on a conversation with those in front of them in tones quite inaudible to any one else. The warders have long ceased to attempt to stop communication between these old stagers. But the "star" (first term) prisoners are more strictly treated. There was an evil practice at Wormwood Scrubbs in my days which may, for all I know, exist at the present moment, of allowing the "old lags" and "star" prisoners to herd together at exercise for the first few days, pending the arrival of an order from the Home Office to move "star" prisoners. I have no doubt that much harm results from this arrangement. The object of the "star" system is to keep first offenders from the degradation and contamination of association with habitual criminals, and this is an essential and primary condition of any well-ordered penal system. It is difficult, therefore, to say why it should be waived at the very beginning of a "star's" imprisonment.

As we twisted and twined in and out during the sixty minutes of monotonous parade I was the object of enormous curiosity among the "old lags"—not because they knew who I was, but because I was a stranger. The prison world is a small world. A new prisoner is as much an object of interest as the passenger who joins a ship at an intermediate port. I suddenly detected a voice behind me hoarsely whispering, "What are you here for, old man, and what have you got?"

I was only wearing then a badge indicating the number of my cell. Later on the correct official number and term of sentence (mine V. 460—14) is marked upon a prisoner's uniform and cap, and is an addition to the broad arrows which I have already mentioned.

Much discussion has taken place of late years as to

whether conversation should be allowed in prison or not, and a little relaxation of the silent system has been granted to well-conducted prisoners in the fourth and special stages who are permitted to walk and talk together for about forty minutes on Sunday afternoons, but at Wormwood Scrubbs there was nothing of the kind. The silent system was as strictly maintained as was possible under human organization. I was at Wormwood Scrubbs for close on seven months, and I hardly exchanged twelve words with a fellow-prisoner during the whole of that time. My conversations were limited entirely to very brief replies to the warder's questions, to an occasional chat with the chaplain, and a passing remark with the then Governor, Captain Price, one of the best governors in the prison service. After the exercise we shuffled back to our cells, and I use the word "shuffle" advisedly, because this is a kind of walk—a gait—peculiar to prisoners. I do not know why it becomes a habit, but it certainly is one, just as there are many other prison habits which it is equally difficult to account for. Doubtless it is due to the mechanical routine; and almost everything in prison is different from things outside. For example, should a warder in charge of a party of prisoners encounter the Governor showing some visitors round the prison, it is the warder's duty to make his party halt and turn their faces to the wall. I may add that all words of command are given as with soldiers—halt, right turn, quick march, and at Wormwood Scrubbs in cold weather, "double." At Parkhurst a prisoner is never allowed to run; it is a punishable offence.

Resuming my narrative of my first day of penal servitude, I will describe the first breakfast. It was my first of nearly 4000 identical breakfasts, and consisted of a pint of impossible tea and an eight-ounce brown loaf—but this

eight-ounce loaf is not so ample as it may seem, for a substantial portion of every loaf consists of crust. The wise prisoner soaks his loaf in his tea.

I very soon made it my practice to consume my meals as rapidly as possible, so that I could get to work and thus kill time. When I looked up to that appalling wall of 3833 days, it seemed that I should never surmount it. I knew that it had to be worked off day by day, and that the harder I worked, the sooner the day would melt into a week, the week into a month, and the month into a year. It is a common prison saying that the days pass quickly, but the months are dreadfully slow. I determined on that first morning to start on my task with a will. I found that it consisted of making the mail-bags that we see at railway stations.

I do not suppose I had ever done any sewing in my life. After breakfast some heavy canvas was tossed into the cell, a ball of thread, with a lump of wax, and two large needles were handed to me, and I was told to begin to sew it as strongly and neatly as I could. I was also shown how to wax my thread. My only other appliance was a thimble. It was hard work in more ways than one. Until I had threaded a needle with that thread I had no idea how difficult it is, and I am afraid I spent the greater portion of that first day in trying to overcome that initial difficulty. My output for the first day was exactly half a bag, and very badly done at that. I feared that I should be severely reprimanded, and perhaps lose some marks; the fear spurred me on to renewed efforts, but I suppose that through the spy-hole the warder had seen that I was doing my best, and far from being reprimanded, I was rather encouraged.

The difficulties of this new kind of work did certainly drive more serious thoughts from my brain for a few

minutes now and then, but I had not sufficient mastery of my thoughts at that time to keep my mind from the interminable reflections that haunt a ruined man. My fear was that I should be overtaken by madness, and I know from the experience of other intelligent prisoners that this is the trouble that first haunts them all.

On my first Sunday at Wormwood Scrubbs—a day when I had no work of any kind to do, and when the exercise was reduced to half-an-hour—I deliberately set myself to think out the problem of sanity and insanity. I resolved never for a moment to be without mental or manual occupation, to read assiduously, to take up various forms of study, to watch everything that was going on, so that when I regained my freedom I might be able to speak with certainty of the details of prison life, and to write this book. But it requires terrible determination to get the brain straight, to avoid lapsing into regret, thence to despair, and thus to lunacy.

In the course of a few days I became fairly proficient as a mail-bag maker, and I succeeded in doing the allotted task, and ultimately a good deal more.

Dinner was served at the unfashionable hour of half-past eleven. I have since ascertained that the reason prisoners are fed at this extraordinary hour is that the warders should be able to enjoy their midday meal at the ordinary hours of the outside world. I began to take an interest in these warders. They are a class peculiar to themselves. In my judgment greatly underpaid, very much overworked, they are subject to considerable temptations, which will be made apparent as my work proceeds. They are also exposed to an astounding amount of tyranny from the officers immediately above them. I could not have believed that Englishmen would have inflicted or endured such tyranny as I have seen among prison

officers. The first warder I particularly noticed was a man in immediate charge of me, who, I imagine, was a retired seaman. He has long since left the prison service with his well-earned pension. I can truly say he was kindness itself. He made my work as easy as he could by instruction, he encouraged me in my hours of depression, and spontaneously spoke to the doctor, when he thought that my health was giving way, insisting that unless I had a change of food, I should break down altogether.

In my first few weeks at Wormwood Scrubbs I ate hardly anything at all. The whole life was so new, so horrible, and in addition to my grief and brain torture I was in constant dread of breaking some of the rules and losing marks. To some men the confinement for twenty-three hours a day in a cell is productive at first of a state of mental irritation which is shown in many curious ways; but, frankly, I was profoundly grateful for the seclusion at Wormwood Scrubbs. It enabled me to grapple with the task of training my brain and my life for the work before me. It was in a small measure a sort of "rest cure" after the anxiety of the voyage to England and the suspense I endured before and during my trial. I must admit, however, that my feelings about close confinement are exceptional. On the great majority of prisoners it produces a wholly different effect. It depresses some, and others it irritates to the verge of madness. The most common way in which this irritation shows itself in a cell is by smashing the cell windows, destroying everything breakable and tearing to threads every scrap of clothing. I have seen an average well-educated man—by no means violent or malevolent in other circumstances—not in prison for any crime of violence, sitting stark naked on the floor of his cell, having torn his books, bedding, and clothes into shreds, and having smashed up

his stool and table. Another startling experience was the sight of a small procession consisting of two warders, a stark-naked prisoner followed by two other warders, heading for the separate or punishment cells. As for the punishment of such offences, it will suffice here to observe that good-conduct marks are doled out at the rate of eight per diem, so that every time a prisoner loses eight marks he is condemned to one day the more of penal servitude. A week means fifty-six marks. I am happy to say that I never lost a mark.

The afternoon at Wormwood Scrubbs, at least so far as I was concerned, passed exactly as the morning. I plodded steadily on with my mail-bags, and in the course of about ten days was able to turn out my allotted diurnal task. But as it grew easier the mental relief derived from it grew less, because after a time I began to sew naturally and automatically, and my brain reverted to my troubles. It was then that I turned eagerly to books.

As is the case in all other prisons, every cell was provided with a Bible, prayer-book, hymn-book, and generally some depressing specimen of goody-goody literature, denominated a "devotional book." The state of the library at Wormwood Scrubbs at that time was disgraceful. The books were old, out of date and condition, and quite unsuitable for an educated man. The librarian was the worst bully I ever encountered in prison, and was indeed the only official who ever insulted me during my term of imprisonment. He came to my cell in the course of his duty as librarian and school-master, and asked me what books I would like. His tone was extremely rough and brutal. I told him, and he said, "There is not much of a library here. I do not think we have any books that will suit you." I replied, "Give me whatever you have, then." He said, "We have some Standard Three and Standard

Four Readers." I said, "Well, I can do with them if you have nothing better." As he left the cell I got up courteously to accompany him to the door. As soon as he reached the door and saw me standing behind him, he said, fiercely and threateningly, "How dare you rise! How dare you leave your seat! I have a good mind to report you." I said, "I beg your pardon. I did it as an act of courtesy," and slunk back to my bench, hoping that I should never see the bully again. I think he was ashamed of himself, for my wish was fulfilled. Afterwards he always sent a warder to change my books. I existed for a whole week on Gray's *Elegy*. Cobbett's *Advice to Young Men* lasted me another week, and then I turned to School Histories of England, of which there seemed to be an extraordinary collection. Indeed, they so confused me by their differences as to facts and dates and by their antagonistic views as to men and events, that I think I was less clear about the history of my country after I had finished than when I first started them. I related this experience some years afterwards to another school-master. He laughed, and said, "Oh, old ——! he was one of the old school. He knew nothing about books. He never read books himself and hated every prisoner who did!"—a suitable person for a librarian, truly! No doubt the miserable condition of the library was largely attributable to his peculiarities.

About 5 p.m. the work of the day is collected. This is an intimation that supper will soon be served. It consists of a pint of skilly and the inevitable eight-ounce loaf. Skilly had never been a particular favourite of mine. I could get it down in an emergency, but that was all. I have mentioned that the authorities at Wormwood Scrubbs were watching my health closely—doubtless in their own interests as much as mine—and in my case skilly

was soon knocked off, and cocoa—although too heating for the warm weather—took its place.

Owing to the fact that I was not accustomed to the kind of work on which I was engaged, I did not get nearly as much leisure as other men for reading, for I spent a good deal of time between supper and "lights out" in waxing my threads, so that I should not be delayed on the following day.

After "lights out" the night patrol in their "sneaks" began to peer through the spy-holes, and what strange spectacles these men have seen! They have more than once found prisoners hanging dead from the window bar or lying throttled on the floor. These are the two methods of suicide most commonly in vogue in prison, and doubtless it is to prevent suicide that the spying is so continuous. Inasmuch as penal servitude does lead to suicide and insanity, this perpetual spying is, I believe, an absolute necessity. Horrible as it is, it cannot be avoided, and the prudent night patrol immediately he comes on duty makes it his first business to take a long and careful peep at every prisoner. He has to assure himself that his man is in his cell, and alive. He has to satisfy himself that no attempt—impossible though it may be—at escape has been made, and for that reason he must be certain that the figure lying on the bed is really that of a living man.

My silent and solitary existence there was suddenly and unexpectedly broken. In those days it was not unusual to serve the whole nine months of probation in that prison, but on the morning of June 4, 1896, I was dressing in my cell, when my warder entered and said, to my immense surprise, "We are going to lose you." "What do you mean?" I replied. "They are going to send you away." He bade me dress as quickly as possible, and

after a hasty breakfast I was taken out into the passage. My warder took a surreptitious farewell of me. It was obvious that he was really sorry to lose me. He whispered, "I must not say a word to you out here. Come back to the cell and say good-bye." I went back. We shook hands cordially, with feelings, I am sure, of mutual good-will and respect, and then he handed me over to a principal and assistant warder, who were waiting ready dressed for the journey. They immediately led me to the chief warder's office, where for the first time in my life the irons (handcuffs) were placed upon my hands. After "Black Maria" that was the most cruel humiliation of all these cruel years, and then I was conveyed in a four-wheeled cab past my old home at Marlborough Gate, along the Bayswater Road, and down Park Lane *en route* to Waterloo Station. And then where was I going? To Parkhurst or Portland? I could not tell. I was not told.

## CHAPTER VI

### FIRST GLIMPSE OF PARKHURST

My last chapter closed with my sudden departure from Wormwood Scrubbs on Thursday, June 4, 1896. From my point of view—the point of view of a prisoner—the suddenness of that departure was its salient feature. The Home Office people and the prison authorities, in obviously servile imitation, have a perfect passion for the unexpected. It amounts to a mania with them.

Prison life, as we have already seen, is a life of absolute and baneful monotony, a monotony which maddens, and is only broken by occasional (very occasional) and meteoric surprises. The people who work the system really seem to feel an infantile and malicious delight in keeping a prisoner ignorant of any impending change, or removal, or visit, though they, themselves, have been cognizant of it for days. What good purpose is attained by such childish mystery? The effect is really very hurtful to the prisoner, and robs him of all the benefit—mental and physical, especially mental—derivable from a change of scene and surroundings. For, when the event occurs, coming, as it does, with all the startling effect of a sudden blow, the prisoner, instead of being prepared, cheerful and expectant, is startled, excited and distressed.

Moreover, this working in the dark, and by surprise, has also a very bad effect on prison discipline, for it is

impossible to keep warders in the dark in the same way that prisoners are kept. Some inkling of a change is almost certain to leak out, and the result is that surreptitious communications between warders and prisoners, which are always undesirable, are actually encouraged. The class of sturdy Englishmen from which the warders are drawn has, to do it bare justice, an honourable and characteristic contempt for humbug, official or otherwise, and many warders, otherwise strict disciplinarians, manifest that contempt by their readiness to give a prisoner whom they can trust some hint—(some "friendly tip," in prison parlance) of what is about to happen; but all such tips are naturally vague and doubtful. The Home Office often changes what for want of a better word may be called their mind. I have myself known an instance of an order being cancelled by telegram when more than half executed, so that the friendly "tip," however well intended, is often quite valueless. In all this I am speaking from actual knowledge and experience.

This policy of mystery and surprise begets among the high officials—governors and doctors alike—a habit of reserve, duplicity and mental reservation, which it would be very difficult to discriminate among other honourable men from downright lying. This seems a strong and, I fear, a rude statement, but I have chapter and verse with which to substantiate it. It is not a good thing, morally, for prisoners to have cause to mistrust the absolute veracity of the men (the only men who are gentlemen by birth and training) with whom anything like frequent intercourse is tolerated.

In the course of my prison life I have had to endure, to put up with, as best I could, many painful changes—painful from the circumstances and the methods which attended them; and in every case, without exception, the pain and

the humiliation were accentuated by this policy. It is a wanton, a totally superfluous degradation.

Of course the object of our penal system should not be to degrade, but to elevate. For a man thus degraded is apt soon to think himself something less than a man, a mere chattel, for whose body a receipt is taken, just in the same way as for a parcel at a cloak-room.

Some days before I left Wormwood Scrubbs there had been a gradual clearance of "star" (first offender) convicts. For several mornings I had observed gangs of chained men paraded on the floor of the hall, I had heard the tramping of their feet, and the clanking and clashing of their chains, as they passed out into the courtyard. Many of those men I was destined never to see again, others I met from time to time elsewhere. I had, therefore, inferred that my turn might come soon, and I had anticipated the event by warning my friends through Mr. John O'Connor, who visited me frequently (for his kindness and sympathy had not diminished, but had rather augmented since my trial), that I was likely to leave "The Scrubbs." Nevertheless, the change, when it occurred, came, as I have stated, as a surprise. The occasion was one of distinctly mingled feelings. I was to have a brief peep at the delights of freedom, and any one who has ever been shut up for a prolonged period will know the joy of the first sight of the outdoor world again. But I had still more than 3500 days before me of penal servitude, and when I looked back and realized that I had only been a convict for five months, and had actually only got through about 150 days, I could hardly believe it possible that I should live to finish my term.

It was early, between six and seven o'clock, and in the morning hour shabby Shepherd's Bush looked delightful after the deadly sameness of my cell and exercise yard.

We drove past Marlborough Gate—a fairly long drive in itself—from Wormwood Scrubbs. It was a beautiful spring morning, and though it was so early there was much animation in the park—children walking with governesses and nurses, and squadrons of early-rising equestrians, lawyers, doctors, and City men—taking their morning ride. It was a familiar and a pleasing scene, but it seemed to mock me.

I instinctively contrasted in my own mind the healthful and joyous freedom, which thus dazzled my eyes, with my own miserable position—a prisoner, a slave, clad in a degrading garb, with the accursed irons on my wrists. I averted my eyes from the scene with a sense of sickening despair. "Where are we going to?" I asked the principal warder. "Oh, you'll know soon enough," he answered. "But surely there can't be any objection to telling me?" He was silent. "Are we going to Dartmoor?" I persisted. "There are no 'stars' at Dartmoor," he said. "Portland?" I rejoined. He shook his head. "Oh, thanks," I added, "so it's Parkhurst," and I at once recalled the fact that some years before I had purchased a small farm in the Isle of Wight, on the borders of Parkhurst Forest, adjoining the prison lands, and which was dear to me from the fact that some eighty years before my mother had spent her childhood there. Though I was afterwards destined, twice a day for several years, to look up from the exercise yard at an elevated portion of this former small property of mine, I don't think the prospect distressed me. It is impossible to account for the workings of the human mind. It did not sadden, it rather consoled me. In looking up to what had once been *my* fields, I was comforted with the reflection that even in prison I had not lost all traces of my former personality.

We—the principal, the assistant warder, and I—

continued our drive down Park Lane, Grosvenor Place, Birdcage Walk, and Westminster Bridge to Waterloo Station. Truly the ways of the Home Office are inscrutable; here had I been carried half-way across London in a four-wheeled cab, when I could have been taken quite unobserved at that hour of the morning from Kensington Station to Clapham Junction or Waterloo in a third of the time, and at a tenth of the money; but the time was public time and the money was public money, so I presume it did not matter.

Arrived at Waterloo, I was at once attracted by the newspaper placards on the bookstalls, and very striking placards they were. They proclaimed "The Prince's Derby," "Record time," "Persimmon wins." Of course, I had been ignorant until I saw the placards that the Derby had been run on the previous day, or that the Prince of Wales had a horse engaged in the race.

I was dazed and confused by the change from my cell, and was glad when we entered into the reserved compartment of a third-class carriage, the doors were locked, and our journey began. I had one consolation. I had none of the luggage worries which attend the ordinary traveller, and which so often mar his enjoyment. Convicts travel without any luggage, except the documents dealing with the custody of their own bodies. One small package I had, and it contained a little hunk of bread and meat. I was so upset that I remember only two incidents of that journey. As the train ran by Raynes Park Station I caught an all too brief glimpse of a great friend of mine hurrying to catch the morning train to town, and at Eastleigh I attracted and suffered from the attention of a party of two men and a woman, who evidently recognized me, though I did not know them, and who sauntered to and fro before the carriage windows, into which they peered

as if I were some curious monstrosity. Their behaviour so annoyed the principal warder that he pulled up the window with an expression of impatience and disgust, and stood up behind it, so as to screen me as much as he could from their vulgar molestation—the inevitable result of sending a convict in prison garb by train in full daylight and handcuffed.

Arrived at Southampton, I took shelter in a quiet corner of the fore-cabin of the steamer, in which we crossed from Southampton to Cowes. Here I happily encountered less curiosity. They are evidently familiar with convict prisoners on those boats. Small things strike the brain at critical times, and I still remember that I was interested in noticing the frequent visits which the fore-cabin passengers made to the rather uninviting bar. I have crossed the Solent some hundreds of times under very different and happier circumstances, but I had never before realized the amount of spirituous sustenance which the fore-cabin passenger requires on so short a voyage.

At Cowes we entered a very comfortable open wagonette, and with only a shade more attention than we attracted on the steamboat drove through the streets of Cowes along the Newport Road, till, turning suddenly to the right and passing through a very pleasant avenue of noble trees, we entered the principal gates of Parkhurst convict prison. It was about 12.45 p.m., and the officers were just gathering around the gates to return to duty after their midday meal. The preliminary proceedings attending the "reception," as it is called, of a new inmate were got through in a business-like and not unkindly or offensive manner. I have rarely witnessed any offensive behaviour towards prisoners by the warders at Parkhurst. Then we passed into the large and very pretty flower-garden which lies between the prison gates and the inner prison buildings.

This garden is quite a distinctive and creditable feature of Parkhurst, though many of the convicts rarely see it, and it would really appear to be kept up mainly for the purpose of impressing the casual free visitor to Parkhurst with quite an exaggerated idea of its residential attractions. Would that it were extended so as to include the bare and uninviting yards in which the prisoners take their daily, and especially their Sunday, exercise! Be that as it may, appreciating as we all do the humanizing and elevating influences of a well-kept and well-stocked garden, I would suggest to the authorities that some arrangement could easily be made whereby the better-behaved and more orderly prisoners might more fully enjoy the sight and surroundings of the pretty and well-kept lawns and flower-beds which lie between the great gates and the Governor's offices.

As we passed in front of the office we found on its steps the Deputy-Governor, who was evidently waiting for me. The then Governor, it appeared, was away on temporary leave, as I afterwards learnt was generally the case on the occasion of most of the more important race meetings. The Deputy-Governor seemed a kindly, not to say jovial, personage. He greeted me with a cheery nod, and called out, "Are you all right? Any complaints?" "None, sir," I replied. He dismissed me with another pleasant nod, and I went on to the "separate cells," where most, if not all, newcomers pass the first twenty-four hours of their life at Parkhurst. Here I was ordered to divest myself of all the clothes I was wearing (which belonged to "The Scrubbs") and to attire myself in precisely similar garments pertaining to Parkhurst. This complete change of apparel partakes incidentally of the nature of a thorough and no doubt necessary search.

I had in my pocket a few letters, one of which contained

enclosures which my correspondent had fastened together with the most diminutive pin I have ever beheld. The searching warder pounced upon this with an exclamation of horror. He held it up to the light (as was, indeed, necessary in order to distinguish it), and sternly remarked, "No pins allowed here." "All right," I said, "I do not want it;" and he carefully, and, as I thought, somewhat ironically, took possession of the dangerous weapon. The change of clothing was not made without some difficulty. I was very stout at the time, was losing flesh steadily, but only very slowly, and the difficulty seemed to be to provide me with temporary clothing until I could be properly fitted with garments which would be sufficient for a man of my girth without being ludicrously long for a man of my height. Every prison, it would seem, keeps a jealous hold on its own stock of clothing. A prisoner on arriving at a convict prison has to divest himself of all the clothes he comes in, which are considered the property of the prison he has left, and to array himself in an outfit belonging to the prison he has just entered. This is a vexatious and troublesome, but probably necessary regulation. The difficulty was eventually overcome in my case. "The Scrubbs" officials, who had escorted me, gathered up in a bag their clothing, which I had just abandoned, and departed, and I found myself installed in a clean but rather cold cell. I paced up and down it all the rest of the day.

I was not distracted by many interruptions. The seclusion and quiet were not unwelcome after the novel and distressing experiences of the journey. I really enjoyed my frugal supper of dry brown bread and cocoa. Next morning the bell rang at ten minutes past five, breakfast was served at half-past, at seven I attended the short morning service in the chapel, and the rest of the

forenoon was occupied with necessary visits to and from various functionaries.

I was taken to the shoemaker's shop. My arrival there excited the greatest interest among the shoemakers, who were all "old lags." The master shoemaker was a warder who has since deservedly risen very high in the service, a precise, kindly, careful man. His wares were not of the quality or character to pass muster in Bond Street, but I consoled myself with the reflection that they were good enough for Parkhurst. I was supplied with a decent pair of shoes of the kind known in my boyhood as "Oxonians," and a portentous Brobdingnagian pair of boots known in Lancashire as "wife kickers." Having thus provided for my feet, my head was naturally the next consideration.

I was interviewed by the school-masters. When I had succeeded in satisfying them, as I did with some apparent difficulty, that I could both read and write, I was told I should undergo a closer educational examination in the evening. This both encouraged and flattered me.

From the school-master I went to the medical officer. He had all my papers before him, and although I had passed through a searching medical examination at Wormwood Scrubbs, he punched me and probed me to his heart's content. Indeed, he seemed truly disappointed that he could find nothing the matter with me. Just when I thought the ordeal was over, his face brightened as he exclaimed, "Stop a minute. Have you any veins?" I started and hastened to assure him that to the best of my belief I was possessed of the usual quantity of those necessary organs of the human frame. "Oh, of course," he said, "but I meant varicose veins." I told him I was not aware of being so endowed. His face dropped. He was evidently disappointed that from a medical point of view I was not an interesting prisoner, and dismissed me with an air of resignation.

Then I saw the chaplain, a somewhat bumptious divine —I am speaking of the chaplain of ten years ago; his theological researches were not exhaustive, and I returned to the separate cell, feeling that metaphorically I had been turned inside out from top to toe; feet, brains, and soul had all been investigated.

In the afternoon I was definitely located on No. 5 landing in "A" hall, where I was to finish my "probation." Here I found myself surrounded by some of my old companions at "The Scrubbs," who had preceded me to Parkhurst, and I resumed my old occupation of mail-bag making. That evening the prison rules were read over to me by the warder in charge of my landing. He was one of the old school of warders, and seemed to have quite as much difficulty in reading the rules as I had in understanding them. They were apparently framed on Mosaic lines telling me principally what I was Not to do. It seemed to me that my one chance of safety was to do nothing at all, and that if I succeeded in such task, I should be considered a well-conducted and industrious prisoner, and should earn the maximum number of marks. From subsequent observation I am disposed to believe that this was the conclusion of most of my fellow-prisoners.

About half-past five o'clock I was told that it was time to go to school. I descended several flights of iron stairs to the basement of the hall, which is popularly known to every one at Parkhurst as the "Cock-pit," and took my seat with a dozen or so of very elderly school-boys. The examination was not a stiff one. I read half-a-dozen lines from a school history of England, wrote a few sentences from dictation, successfully disposed of two or three sums in arithmetic, and received an educational diploma, which was tersely comprised in three figures, "666." This had no reference to the number of the beast in the Revelation, but denoted that I was of the highest prison educational

status, a triple Standard VI man. I need not say that I was very gratified with my success.

The next morning, Saturday, the Epsom week being over, the Governor appeared upon the scene and granted me a brief interview in the exercise yard immediately after chapel. All that he appeared to want to know was whether I had had the prison rules read over to me, and on my satisfying him in this respect, he abruptly turned on his heels and departed. I fancied he must have had a "bad week" at Epsom. He certainly was not nearly so good-humoured as the Deputy-Governor, who had been passing the same week amid the less exciting surroundings of Parkhurst.

Now here, I thought, my changes are over.

> "Here is my journey's end.
> Here is my butt and very sea-mark of my utmost sail."

This seemed a reasonable conclusion. It was, however, a false one. A great and cruel surprise was in store for me. The following Tuesday the doctor sent for me again and asked me a few formal questions. I thought in my ignorance it was a mere matter of routine. My astonishment and my fear were therefore great when a prisoner, the orderly who collected my mail-bags that afternoon, whispered to me, "You are going to Portland to-morrow." I did not believe him. It seemed to me impossible, not to say indecorous, that another prisoner should thus be able to speak with certainty about a change which had been so carefully concealed from the man whom it concerned. But such are prison ways.

The orderly was right, and next morning I was taken down to the separate cell, the irons were again placed on my wrists, and to my amazement, after a stay in Parkhurst of only five days, I was hurried on to Portland under the

escort of a principal and assistant warder. The motive for the change was a mystery to me at the time, and it has remained a mystery ever since. That journey was indeed a trial. I was just beginning to get used to Parkhurst and to learn its ways when, without apparent rhyme or reason, except for the purpose of spending unnecessarily the public money in travelling, I was exposed to another weary day's journey, and found along my route groups of curious sight-seers who had evidently been apprised of my movements. How this information leaked out I can only guess at, for I never knew.

On Cowes Pier there was the inevitable photographer and quite a throng of busybodies through whom I had to elbow my way. At Southampton there was a mob of very ill-behaved females. The warders were furious. The principal warder told me that in all his long experience he had never known a prisoner exposed to such indignity. I am sure his annoyance was sincere, for he and his subordinate did all in their power to show their sympathy by lavishing upon me every possible kindness consistent with their duty. That miserable journey, notwithstanding all its discomforts, will ever be remembered by me as giving me one of my first experiences of a warder's good feeling and humanity.

From Southampton Pier to Southampton West Station I was taken in the inevitable four-wheeled cab. There we caught the morning train to Weymouth, and so on to Portland. If my feelings during my journey from London to the Isle of Wight had been those of confusion and mental distress, my sensations as I travelled to Portland were truly those of dread—a dread that I found was not without reason.

## CHAPTER VII

### PORTLAND

I WILL ask the reader to picture to himself a stupendous mass of stone rising grim and stern from the sea, and flanked on all sides, except the south, by lofty and precipitous cliffs—such is the Island of Portland. It seems a place designed by nature for the imprisonment of human beings. What the Château d'If of Monte Cristo fame is to the Mediterranean, such is Portland to the English Channel. With the exception, perhaps, of Princetown, this great convict establishment, which stands 500 feet up in the centre of the "island," is the most prison-like of prisons. Its size, its defences, its situation all combine to impress upon the mind of a man seeing it for the first time the practical hopelessness of trying to escape from it when once within its walls. How many convicts, I wonder, who before then had cherished ideas of escape, have realized when viewing the prison for the first time the almost complete impossibility of making a dash for freedom from such a place?

As the convict shackled by the wrist to brothers in misfortune is driven in a light kind of omnibus up the steep three miles of winding road from the station to the summit, he perceives at once that even should he succeed in reaching the shore, to cross over would be a task of great difficulty. As he draws nearer the prison he begins to see

clearly that even to reach the shore would be a task of the greatest difficulty. Frowning down from the heights stand the military barracks, and sentries with loaded rifles are there night and day, with peremptory orders to fire on a fugitive convict. At the outskirts of the prison the elaborate precautions which society has taken to seclude and safeguard the convict are still more clearly, more painfully apparent. On every spot of vantage stand the civil guards armed with loaded rifle and bayonet, ready to shoot him down like an animal should he make a bid for freedom. As he passes down the narrow street leading to the great iron gates, he sees these guards, alert and watchful, patrolling everywhere. There is no necessity to carve the words, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here," over the entrance to Portland Prison. The massive, cold, grey walls say that for themselves. Portland has about it an atmosphere quite different from that which surrounds Wormwood Scrubbs. To begin with, it is more of a military establishment. Besides the civil guard and the staff of warders, soldiers are employed as an extra guard over the prisoners.

As the great, gloomy gates closed upon me, and I realized that here was the spot in which I was probably to be immured for ten long years, my feelings beggared description. Moreover, before I had been five minutes inside that dreadful fortress I had discovered that there was as much difference between Portland and Parkhurst or Wormwood Scrubbs as there is between Ratcliffe Highway and St. James's Street.

If the brutal warder of popular melodrama was ever a real person, he was to be found at Portland during my time there. That is now many years ago. Things have doubtless changed since then, but Portland as I knew it was a heart-breaking, soul-enslaving, brain-destroying, hell upon

earth. The tone of the officers' voices, their curt, dictatorial and offensive manner, their sneering laughs and gibes struck me as being in consonance with the place itself. But there is an exception to every rule, and I was fortunate to find such an exception in a warder who had the reputation among prisoners of being a very stern disciplinarian, but who treated me with great humanity and patience. I hear that he is still in the service, and has long since been promoted to the rank of principal warder. I shall ever remember him with gratitude.

My "reception" formalities at Portland were much the same as those I have described at Parkhurst, but the manner of them was very different; it was brusque even to brutality. When these were accomplished I was hurried into my cell, which, I was surprised to find, was very different from those Portland cells of which I had heard dreadful rumours But I was still doing my "probation," spending twenty-three hours out of every twenty-four in my cell, and consequently I was not then confined in one of the iron hutches that have made Portland infamous.

Early on the following day the chaplain, an agreeable and courteous man, came to visit me. "It's lucky for you," he said, in the course of some friendly conversation, "that you have come just at this time. The Governor who has recently left was a very severe man indeed. Things are bad enough at present, and even now I would warn you to be very careful of the warders. You are wholly in their power."

This advice was not reassuring, but I soon found out that the chaplain was right. There were half-a-dozen men, "star" prisoners like myself, working out their probation, and many a time did we suffer from the petty and gratuitous tyranny of our brutal guardians. Let me give one or two out of a multitude of instances. During our miserable hour

of exercise the assistant warder who had charge of us on one occasion threw a stick down in our path and defied any man to pass it except on the left-hand side, and threatened to report any man who failed to obey his decree. There was no purpose to be served by this order. It was merely the bullying of helpless men. Another time I remember that a well-conducted youth named G—— (a gentlemanly lad of about twenty years of age), who was walking immediately before me, halted and stooped down to fasten his shoe-lace. He was immediately pounced upon by the warder, who shouted, "You are not to stop; you are not to stoop; you are not to pick up anything; you are not to look anywhere unless I give you leave." I myself was twice reproved by this ruffian for looking up at the sky!

Once a prisoner in passing me smiled. It was not a smile of recognition, for he had probably never seen me before. It was not a secret communication. It was nothing but a casual and kindly smile. But the warder saw and was swift to shout, "Now then, Balfour, smiling is not allowed here." He need hardly have told me that. Few of us in Portland often had the heart to smile. The yards in which we probationers exercised were so small that in order to avoid becoming giddy we found it necessary to turn about and reverse the direction of our walk after half-a-dozen rounds. Imagine the state of the official mind which considers a perambulation of this kind a compliance with the benevolent standing order prescribing at least one hour's "exercise" daily.

Almost every day at Portland was embittered by some such petty tyranny. Once I asked a warder some necessary question in regard to the completion of a piece of work on which I was engaged. Instead of answering me civilly he turned on me, and in regulation Portland style roared out, "How dare you speak to an officer before you are

spoken to!" It placed me in the quandary of one's youth. If I did not complete my task properly I should be punished. If I asked how to do it I should be punished. It was the old nursery-saying over again: "Those who ask shan't have. Those who don't ask, don't want."

One Sunday morning on the way to chapel I had another experience of this sort of thing in connection with a form of marching to which I was unaccustomed. The method then in vogue at Portland was what I believe is known as the "lock" step, in which the prisoners walked as close to each other as possible, each man almost touching the one in front. Why it was instituted goodness only knows. I found it difficult to keep in step with the man before me. The warder seized me by the shoulder, shook me violently, and told me he would report me if it occurred again. I had never in my life been treated in this way, and I found it very difficult to control my temper. Fortunately I succeeded by a great effort in doing so. Had I given way to anything like anger I should certainly have been "run in" and punished, as many a poor fellow provoked by such treatment has bitterly experienced.

To the mind of the supercilious and unimaginative I dare say these seem petty details. They unfortunately made up one's life, and one's whole life, unredeemed by any moment of recreation or leisure, other than the brief period allowed for reading. And in order that that time should be as short as possible and that no amount of extra work should procure a little longer space for literature, the books with which we were provided were carefully removed from our cells during working hours until the "cease labour" bell had rung.

In the course of the next day, when led out to exercise, I began to get some idea of the internal geography of the

place. Never was anything better calculated for the safe imprisonment of human beings than Portland. My near neighbours were Irish Fenian prisoners, some of whom had been engaged in the attempts to blow up the House of Commons and the Mansion House, and in what were known in those days as the dynamite outrages. They had been there some years, and I was puzzled to know why prisoners who were not on probation enjoyed the luxury of the larger cells, which we, who had not completed our nine months, occupied. One of them managed, to my surprise, to communicate with me, and he informed me that they were all kept in the "separate cells" because these cells were of extra strength and were remote from the main buildings. This enabled them to be specially watched, and rendered them particularly safe from any daring attempt at rescue on the part of their fellow-conspirators. Nor were these precautions on the part of the authorities unnecessary, for it is on record that Fenian prisoners have been released by the most desperate measures, and at that time it was believed that plans were on foot for the forcible rescue of these men. I am bound to say, however, that none of them placed the least reliance on any such attempt. Doubtless before they saw the place they thought it possible, but once inside that grim mausoleum they gave up all thought of getting out by force.

I do not doubt that our modern system of penal servitude has deterred a great many of these people from their intention of coercing the Saxon by means of outrage. It is all very well in a moment of enthusiasm to plan revolutionary projects in the safe seclusion of the United States. It is a very different thing to expiate them in the dread monotony of Portland. I should like to say for these men who were my neighbours for months and with

some of whom I worked in the shoemakers' shop, that they were extremely well-behaved, and, as far as one could judge, quiet and pleasant fellows. They were perfectly honest fanatics, and I am not casting any doubts upon their fidelity and sincerity to their cause when I say that I imagine their revolutionary ardour was damped, if not wholly quenched, by what they went through at Portland. The besetting sin of these Fenians struck me as being vanity tempered with an amazing degree of levity, and I can conceive of no more drastic remedy for that than Portland.

Exactly nine months after my sentence I finished my term as a "separate" prisoner. I had looked forward to that day. It marked a definite stage in my prison life. It was one step on the way to freedom. No longer was I to occupy my cell for twenty-three out of every twenty-four hours. I was now to go out and "associate" with other convicts.

Everything in prison goes with clockwork accuracy, and I knew without any doubt that on the evening of August 27, 1896, a warder would come to my cell and remove me to another part of the prison, where I should be given the luxury of "full labour" diet. In one way the change was a bad one. Personally, the last thing I wanted was to associate with men, many of whom can only be described as the scum of the earth. It will be admitted that it was an extreme transition from a seat in the House of Commons and the interests and occupations of business and politics to a forced association with murderers, a stray burglar, criminal doctors, and other gentry of the same kind. Frankly, I preferred my own society.

But this association was not the most trying part of the change. I left my decent and roomy cell and was thrust in the brusque fashion that distinguished Portland into a

box seven feet long, seven feet high, and four feet broad. I am a short man, but I could touch the ceiling with my hand. It was nothing but a small corrugated iron kennel, with a stone or slate floor. There was not so much as a bit of wooden grating on the floor, so that a prisoner, when his boots and stockings were off, had to tread the icy-cold flags. The only articles of furniture in it were a wooden stool, a very diminutive flap table, and a hammock and bedding rolled up on a shelf or ledge in one corner.

I had never hitherto slept in a hammock, but after a night or two I got quite used to it and found it by no means uncomfortable. It was attended with one great drawback—the leather straps which held up the hammock when swung were of the rottenest, and there was hardly a night that some poor wretch was not thrown on to the stones through these wretched straps giving way. I myself experienced this fate two or three times. I can imagine nothing more alarming or disconcerting than for a man to be awakened out of sleep by finding that his bed has violently collapsed beneath him, that his bed-clothing is scattered in all directions, and that he himself is lying prone on a bare stone floor. Shivering and bewildered, the victim has to gather up his bed-clothes, summon the patrol, and receive from him another strap, of which, in view of the frequency of such emergencies, a supply was always kept in hand. Then the bed had to be made up again as best it might. All this had to be done in the dark by a man wearing no other garment than a cotton shirt, and pattering about the stone floor with bare feet. As these descents always made a terrible uproar, the sufferer was further bewildered by the curses of the men near him whom the accident had disturbed. Another dreadful thing about these cells was that they were only separated from one another by a thin sheet of corrugated

zinc. Every movement or sound, every groan, every sigh, every prayer raised by any of my neighbours was heard by me as distinctly as if it had proceeded from my own lips.

And what we suffered in cold weather! "F North," the hall where my cell was situated, had actually then no heating apparatus. This is hard to believe, but it is an absolute fact. And it was so cold in winter that the very warders of the night patrol used to make their rounds of the peep-holes with blankets wrapped about their heads and shoulders. But if *they* suffered from the cold, what was it to us prisoners? Not allowed to take shelter in bed until eight o'clock at night, we were forced to wrap the blankets from our beds around our knees and shoulders in order to keep some degree of warmth in our bodies. And then on stormy nights we could hear the deafening roar of the sea below us as it dashed against the cliffs. The extreme cold robbed me of sleep, and I lay, huddled and half-frozen in my hammock, listening to the groaning and moaning of my fellow-sufferers.

The only consolation that I found in Portland was that I was there released from solitary confinement, and although, as I have already said, solitary confinement looked at merely as part of my imprisonment was not in itself unwelcome to me, yet the change was valuable, for it enabled me to enter actively on my self-imposed task of studying convicts and the convict system. Hitherto, except during the brief periods of exercise, I had seen and known little of what was going on around me. Everything that I had seen had been of the nature of a surprise to me—a subject for wondering speculation. Now I was able to store my brain with facts and incidents and characters which I might reasonably hope might prove of interest if I survived to relate them.

I am bound to say that the mental programme I had

framed at Wormwood Scrubbs for the occupation of my brain during the three thousand eight hundred odd days of penal servitude looked very much like breaking down during my first few weeks in the grim fortress of Portland. I felt my health and strength ebbing away day by day, and at last my appearance attracted the attention of the kindly warder I have referred to. He advised me to see the doctor. I declined. I had made up my mind from the first to ask no favours. I determined to see my punishment through to the bitter end and to take without a murmur whatever hardships it entailed.

The warder, however, spoke to the doctor on his own account. The doctor came to see me, and told me I was running down too quickly, and that I must go into hospital. My reduction in weight had been practically one pound a week ever since my conviction. I had, therefore, been reduced already nearly two stones. To that I made no objection, for, owing to the sedentary life I had led, I had always been too stout. But the reduction at Portland had begun to tell on me, because it was not merely a reduction in weight owing to the diet, but there was also a reduction due to the mental torture I was enduring.

The doctor at Portland kindly insisted that I should go into hospital, and I thus made my first acquaintance with criminal hospital life. It would not require much knowledge of human nature to realize that admission to hospital is the ardent hope of a goodly proportion of many who are sentenced to a long term of penal servitude. This is illustrated by an amusing joke which is current among the "old lags." In my capacity as librarian orderly at Parkhurst I often asked old prisoners what book they would like, and a very general reply was, "Well, I want the most popular book here." "What is that?" I asked. "How to square the doctor," was the glib reply.

And this, indeed, is the study of a large proportion of the habitual prisoners. Prison doctors become not unnaturally a peculiarly suspicious race. They speedily realize that their life is a contest of brains against brains. On their part they have to maintain, to the best of their ability, the general health of the prison, and to keep the number of inquests down to an average that will not attract the attention of the House of Commons or the Press. The prisoner, on the other hand, makes a speciality of the game of "playing the old soldier," and many a convict has carried the pursuit to a rare pitch of perfection. It has become a fine art with him. The doctors are slow to admit a new man into the luxuries of hospital life; but if the convict be persistent and skilful in developing symptoms of ill-health, he will ultimately overcome the doctor's suspicions, or wear out his patience. It is but another illustration of the parable of the Unjust Judge and the Importunate Widow. The cleverest men at working their way into hospital are convict doctors. Here there is truly a splendid match of wits against wits, for the prison doctor has perhaps to contend with some cunning old general practitioner who is up to every trick of the trade.

I recall the case of a well-known man—a doctor—who had simultaneously many absolutely contradictory infirmities. We joked him about their number and variety, and he good-humouredly accepted our sarcastic allusions with a cunning air of undisguised satisfaction. He would feign and fancy anything, and he was perfectly confident that he was suffering at one and the same time from diabetes, cancer, and other dreadful and mortal maladies. His only disadvantage was that he was one of the chubbiest of men. The old "soap trick" is still worked. Prisoners actually eat soap to cause foaming at the mouth when

simulating the contortions of epilepsy. But the "soap trick" is pretty well understood and exploded. The up-to-date convict practitioner deals with more recondite ailments.

Nervous debility is a common sham complaint. The prisoner alleges that he cannot lift weights, that he can scarcely drag one leg after another, and that he is subject to indescribable sensations of the most distressing character. He is afraid to stand by day or to lie down by night.

The last resort is to sham madness, but the man who feigns madness is playing with very dangerous tools. Once get the reputation of being "balmy"—to use a common prison expression—so as to be labelled "W.M." (weak-minded), and you may find yourself detained for the full term of your sentence, without any remission, or transferred to Broadmoor, or to the new asylum at Parkhurst quite recently opened—an official folly, by the way, which has cost many thousands of pounds, and provides for less than fifty inmates.

Very reluctantly indeed I obeyed the doctor's commands. On entering the hospital I was told to undress and go to bed. This is a general rule in prison hospitals. The patient, whatever he is suffering from, even if it be the need of fresh air, goes to bed and stops in bed until the doctor orders him up. This seems a startling, but I think a reasonable, arrangement. I was weighed and placed in a very decent cell with a comfortable bedstead. The diet was excellent. I had rabbit and fowl, beef-tea, and plenty of milk. I had a fair supply of books, and as soon as I was ordered up I was allowed one hour's exercise a day. I did my best to recover my strength as quickly as possible, as I feared I might be losing my remission marks, and at the end of eight days I was back again at work.

Those who succeed in getting into hospital may enjoy "medical comforts," but they also have the very doubtful luxury of killing time in the most protracted manner conceivable. I cannot imagine how an active man can stand long-drawn-out torture like that. Personally, I can say that I never had spent an idle day in my working life until I went to prison, and that I never had a really busy day the whole time I was there.

I was, therefore, not at all sorry when my hospital experience came to an end, and I was back again at my mail-bags. I was greatly impressed by the skill and kindness of the doctor. He told me that he wished he had met me before my introduction to prison life, for he would have had many a guinea out of me, but I am bound to add that he treated me as well as he could have done had I been actually paying him my guineas in the ordinary professional way. He is now, I believe, the medical officer at Holloway, which has become a female convict prison. On returning to my ordinary cell, I said to my friendly warder that Doctor G—— was a very clever but very young man. He replied with a good deal of warmth that he was "as good as could be made, he was one of the latest out," just as if he were the most recent type of bicycle or sewing-machine.

It had been a matter of curiosity to me and to my friendly warder as to what kind of labour I should be put to when I had finished my "separates." It was not merely a matter of curiosity so far as I was concerned, but a matter of anxiety as well. My views as to the severity and hardships of prison labour had not then been modified by experience, and I was painfully conscious of my lack of aptitude for purely manual work.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PORTLAND (*continued*)

THE morning after my removal from the separate cells, when we paraded immediately after morning service, I was ordered to fall in with the shoemakers, and I at once found myself the member of a rather limited but very striking little community—a capital sample of the very varied and heterogeneous elements which are found to be among "star" convicts.

We had one or two dynamiters, kindly and well-behaved men, as I have already said; one or two doctors, an accountant, a bank manager, two or three solicitors, a sailor, a soldier, one or two tradesmen, one or two murderers, and one or two clerks who had got into trouble through backing horses. The warder has long since left the service. He was an active adherent of the silent system, which he rigorously enforced.

Woe to the man whom he happened to catch talking. There was one unfortunate sailor whose loquacity was irrepressible, whom he had actually reported no fewer than eight times for talking, and who had thereby lost something approaching to a month's remission. That is to say, this prisoner, who was a very hard-working and otherwise well-conducted man, suffered one month's penal servitude for the heinous crime of cracking a joke or indulging in a gossip with the man seated on the next

bench to him. It was not suggested that he idled—that was venial and natural, that would have been overlooked—but he talked, and for that he got bread-and-water and increased penal servitude. If any man could have stopped talking, this warder could, and he certainly would have done so if he could. His party was comparatively small and all under his very eyes, but talking went on just the same. We talked in pairs.

My Fenian neighbour and I discussed the Irish question at length. We agreed about the wrongs of Erin and differed about the remedy. He was for disunion by violence, and I for "the union of hearts." We spoke with pursed lips and closed teeth, and we plied our hammers so violently all the time we were talking that not a word ever reached our vigilant Cerberus. The curious thing was that he was himself a loquacious man, and greatly relished a gossip with any stray principal or warder who might happen to drop in. On these occasions our own talking became more open and promiscuous, and I was often amused by his complaining in an aggrieved tone that we "took advantage of him whenever he was occupied." Took advantage! Of course we did.

Moreover, I discovered that my shopmates took advantage of him in another way. They had hit upon an ingenious method of avenging their real or fancied wrongs. There is always a good deal of necessary noise in a shoemaker's shop, but whenever our janitor happened to be specially absorbed in a gossip with one of his visitors every hammer in the shop began hammering with an energy that was titanic. The noise and the clamour were positively deafening. They rendered the place unendurable, and drove the two cronies either to desist or to shout at one another. So soon as the visitor had departed the hubbub subsided to the pitch just suited to cover up the customary conversation on the benches.

This "Master Shoemaker" was, as will be inferred, rather a difficult person to get on with. I think he treated me as kindly, or rather as little unkindly, as he ever treated any prisoner. He bore patiently with my slowness, he explained over and over again the mysteries of his craft, the tricks of the trade; he taught me how to sharpen my knives and how to wax a thread, how to cut leather to the best advantage, how to sole and heel a boot, and gradually I got accustomed to the work, but never could become expert at it.

I gazed with unfeigned admiration and astonishment at every pair of boots I mended. At length I could undertake most repairs. My master told me that my work was strong, but very rough; "however," he added, "you needn't be frightened at your customers—they won't complain." It was not my customers, it was my instructor that frightened me even when he meant to be kind, and I am sure he often did. His kindness took a roundabout form, as if he were ashamed of it. One day I told him that my own shoes were very thin and that I was constitutionally prone to cold feet. He looked at me vacantly, with a watery eye. I timidly added, "I should be very grateful to you if you would let me put them out to have an extra sole put on them." "Extra sole!" he cried. "I don't make no promises. Understand me. I don't make no promises." I was discouraged, and of course I did not put the shoes out. Cold feet were hard to bear, but snubbing was worse. The next day he said, "Where are them shoes you spoke about? Why didn't you put them out?" "Because you didn't give me leave," I said. "You're very green," he replied. "I thought you would have known better. Put 'em out to-night. I don't want no cold feet in this party."

I stopped in "this party" for six months, and had got so accustomed to my companions and my daily work, and even to my warder, that I was very sorry when it was

announced that the party was to cease to be a "star" (first offender) party, and that our places were to be taken by "old lags." I never understood the reason for the change; it certainly was very distasteful to our warder. Whether he was thought to be too severe or too indulgent, I never knew. I heard both reasons assigned. As the day approached for our dispersing he adopted quite a paternal air. We heard no more of our misdeeds. He deplored the sufferings we should endure in any other party under any other warder, and finally actually allowed us a day or two of unrestricted talk.

On March 1, 1897, we "stars" were dispersed amongst the other "star" parties. I was sent to the tinsmith's party, known, if I remember rightly, as "No. 3." At this place I pause for a moment in my narrative to ask what it was that was amiss with that warder. I unhesitatingly affirm that it was the system, and the system only, which made this man, who was a capital tradesman, the object of so much dread and dislike. I firmly believe he was a good fellow at heart.

Like all other warders, he could never depend on the support of his immediate superiors—directors, inspectors, and governors. They get the credit for any good results of the system (such results are few), while the men who do the work, who know all about it and live ten and twelve hours a day among the convicts, get the blame for all its failures. They are the men who are fined, degraded, or dismissed when anything goes wrong. Over-worked and under-paid, it may be truly said that the warder's life is not a happy one. They therefore go about, as this man appeared to do, in fear of their own shadows. When they reported prisoners, they were as often as not liable to rebuke and snubbing; if they failed to report, they were reprimanded, and probably fined as well. Terrorized and

bullied by their superiors, they were equally afraid of the convicts who were under them. The latter ever looking for any opportunity to trip them up, the former ready to snub and punish them.

The tinsmith's shop at Portland is a large, well-appointed modern workshop, turning out a great quantity of very useful work. It is, or was, as far as I could judge, and I have had some experience of manufacturing businesses, by far the best of all the trade working parties that I have had opportunities of observing. In all respects it is infinitely superior to the vaunted printer's shop at Parkhurst.

In the tinsmith's shop I was put to solder tins—by no means heavy and obviously useful work. There was a very competent and accessible instructor, and the officer in charge of the party, who, I understand, has recently quitted the service, was one of the kindest, most patient, and most sensible men I ever met anywhere. I am happy to dwell on this, for I have spoken of the general harshness, not to say brutality, of the Portland officials. I am anxious to bring out the fact that at that time there were good and kind officials even there, and that I was so fortunate as to meet them. I am glad to show by these remarks that I am as grateful to them now as I was fortunate in knowing them then.

At Portland I first became familiar with one very bad phase of prison life—a phase which is by no means confined to the "old lags," but is conspicuous among all classes of prisoners. Indeed, I think it is even more common among the "stars." I refer to the curious moral callousness which leads prisoners to take at all times an inadequate and often totally false view of the nature of their crime and the justice of their punishment. It was quite a revelation to me, and it annoyed me very much;

I heard so many lies, so many perversions of quite obvious truths, that I resolved never, if I could help it, to talk to my fellow-prisoners or to encourage them to talk to me about their offences. Such talk was really worthless.

Nearly every man I met spoke of himself as deeply wronged and proclaimed his innocence. It really seemed that I was surrounded by so many immaculate and injured men that Portland, instead of being a Temple of Guilt, was actually an abode of injured innocence. I think I ought in justice to add that this shameless and impudent mendacity may partially account for and excuse the neglect and indifference which are attributed to the Home Office in the matter of petitions. It is not in human nature that even the best disposed and most assiduous of public servants can go on year after year perusing dispassionately and sympathetically documents which a protracted and painful experience has taught them are generally nothing but insidious and specious perversions of the truth. I really believe that the interests of justice and humanity would be better served if the system of petitions were either abolished altogether or held in abeyance, and if prisoners and their friends were afforded opportunities—say once in a year—of making a public and personal application to some competent tribunal for a reconsideration of facts and a mitigation of sentences. I am strongly of opinion that a periodical and systematic revision of sentences by a competent tribunal would go far to remove the greatest blot on the administration of the criminal law in this country—the scandalous inequality of sentences for similar offences. It would also relieve the Home Secretary of duties which often, I am sure, to his own dissatisfaction, he is compelled to entrust to irresponsible subordinates.

It was at Portland that I first became fully and very painfully familiar with the methods which are in daily use of searching convicts and their cells. I will premise in all fairness, for I am anxious to be fair, that the subject is a difficult one. I am quite ready to admit that some kind of searching may not only be desirable, but is necessary. Without it I have no doubt that illicit articles, tobacco, and cuttings from newspapers especially, would almost certainly find their way into many cells, and so might food, food from outside, and not merely what is the result of what is known as "trafficking" among prisoners. As to the latter, the surplus loaf which the man of small appetite does not require, instead of going to the pig-trough, would pass to the ever-hungry man of larger appetite—and a good job that it should. Indeed, it happens already, and will continue to happen so long as sympathy and humanity exercise any influence over men's hearts.

It is also possible, barely possible, that surreptitious communications from outside might penetrate the prison walls, though with the more modern generation of warders I think this extremely unlikely. Such of the old bullying and intriguing warders as remain may still be (as they certainly once were) corrupt, but they are quite alive to the fact that the whole tone of the service has changed. According to them, it has "gone to the dogs"—of course. They know that any gross violation of prison rules would be speedily detected and remorselessly denounced by their younger and better educated colleagues.

This question of searching is therefore, as I say, a difficult one. I won't pause here to discuss whether it is necessary, or even wise, to make a fuss about some of the articles which the searching is especially directed to detect—fuss is a very prominent and a very silly feature

in the working of prisons—I will assume that all the forbidden articles are wisely prohibited, and I will now go on to describe the searching, which, however it may be carried out, is, and necessarily must be, uncongenial to self-respecting warders and vexatious to prisoners. Looked at from the most favourable point of view, it is a disagreeable business to be got over with as little annoyance and unpleasantness as possible. A prisoner is actually searched regularly no fewer than four times a day, except Saturdays and Sundays, when he is searched at least twice. This is the regular and periodical searching, which is an integral part of the daily routine. A man who spends ten years in a convict prison will therefore be searched in this way alone about thirteen thousand times.

After morning chapel prisoners parade according to their working parties in their respective exercise yards, and the search is the principal feature of such parade. They are formed into something nearly approaching the "columns of companies" of military drill, each party being under its own warder or warders. A principal warder is present and hovers about, passing from one party to another, observing whether the searching is properly conducted. The chief warder and the deputy-governor also both walk through the yard while the morning parade is proceeding. There is, therefore, an abundance of supervision. The warders search and direct the parties. The principal warders watch and rebuke the warders. The chief warder eyes and snarls at the principal warders, and the deputy-governor rarely opens his mouth, but nevertheless looks after them all very thoroughly. It is difficult to extend the supervision further. It would seem as if the system were devised with the object of furnishing an answer to the familiar Latin query, "Quis custodiet custodes?"—Who watches the watchmen?

The word is given, "Attention—Open Order—March—Left Dress—Unbutton." At the latter word the prisoner, however bitter may be the wind, however severe the frost, opens his blouse and jacket, takes his handkerchief out of his only pocket and his cap off his head, holding his arms outspread, his handkerchief loosely in his left and his cap in his right hand. Thereupon the warder passes down the ranks. He examines carefully every handkerchief and cap so exposed, taking the cap (this is a strict order) into his own hands for that purpose; then he proceeds to "rub down" the prisoner. Putting his hands into the aforesaid pocket (another strict order), he afterwards carefully passes his hands down the body and legs of the prisoner, right down to his very heels, much after the fashion of a dexterous shampooer at a Turkish bath. This seems a long process, but it is extraordinary how quickly and yet how effectually it can be carried out. As the ceremony proceeds, each prisoner when searched hastens to cover his head and button up again his jacket and blouse as quickly as he can—a very natural, necessary proceeding in cold or wet weather.

When this formality is completed, the order is given, "Close Order—March—Stand at Ease—Attention—Left Turn—Quick March," and the parties proceed past the "saluting point"—a little covered stand where the chief warder is stationed in all his glory. The warder humbly salutes that high functionary, crying out at the same time (let us say, for example), "Twenty-four party—sixty men." The chief warder frowns his dread official frown, and enters the number in a book; the parties—warders and men alike—heaving a spontaneous sigh of relief, pass away from the awful presence to their allotted work.

This searching business is gone through all over again when the "parties" come back from their work before they re-enter their cells, and it is repeated on going to and

returning from work after dinner. I shall naturally be asked, "Does all this do any good? Is it effectual? Are illicit articles often discovered?" Answering the latter inquiry first, I would say that it is a very rare thing indeed for anything to be found on a prisoner at these regular searches. I have known such cases, but I do not recall a single instance where tobacco or a newspaper have ever been found on these occasions. The searching, however, is none the less effective. It does do good, for it acts as a deterrent. A prisoner knowing the ordeal he has to pass through would be insanely reckless if with such knowledge he allowed himself to be caught with anything contraband in his possession.

In addition to this fourfold daily bodily search, a prisoner's cell is "turned over," that is, thoroughly searched regularly at least once a month. There is a warder known as "the searching warder," who, with a staff of assistant warders, is solely occupied in thus examining the prisoners' cells. Every cell is, as I have said, minutely searched monthly, and in case of suspected prisoners probably much oftener, and even possibly daily. This monthly search is always referred to by warders and prisoners alike as "Having the brokers in." Every article in the cell is turned upside down or inside out. Even the salt-cellar is emptied. The prisoners' letters and books are carefully scrutinized and, it may be, read. The pillow-case is taken off the pillow (by the way, pillow-cases are quite a recent luxury, they were not in use until long after I left Portland), the sheets and blankets are spread open and tossed upon the floor—not a very cleanly proceeding. The mattress is probed and pummelled, and every crack and cranny is inspected. Even the very unsavoury bundle of cleaning rags is unfastened and its contents scattered all around.

I would ask my reader to picture to himself the dismay

and annoyance of a prisoner who, on returning from work to his cell, finds it thus littered all over with sheets, blankets, bedding, rags, letters, books, etc., etc. Coming in very tired, as I often did, from my work, I always experienced something like a feeling of despair when I found my cell reduced to this dreadful state. It always brought to my mind the prophet Daniel's expressive phrase, "the abomination of desolation."

The Portland warders were particularly exasperating and offensively careless in their procedure. The bed-clothes would often be foul with the searcher's footprints, and besmeared and blackened by all the dirty and dusty accretions of the grimy stone floors. Towel, soap and cleaning rags would all be mixed up together in a singularly uninviting heap. This cell search takes place, as I have said, at least once a month. But that is not considered enough, and in addition thereto, the officers of the respective wards are expected, or rather are supposed, to make another and independent search on their own account once a week, or once a fortnight, I am not quite sure which. With regard to this latter search, I use the words "expected" and "supposed" advisedly, for it is a very perfunctory proceeding. Every prisoner knows that he is liable to it, and that it may happen any evening, but the officers have really not the time to do it thoroughly, and it is therefore both at strict Portland and more indulgent Parkhurst a custom more honoured in the breach than in the observance. If a warder should happen to have a grudge against a particular prisoner (I have known such a warder and such a case), it will be the cell of that prisoner which will be selected for searching. Not because the warder expects to find anything in it, but because it will give the prisoner trouble and inflict on him a petty humiliation.

Do the authorities know that this further searching by

the officers in charge of wards is not thoroughly carried out? Of course they do, and of course they don't. They do know that it is not carried out, for they know there is not time enough to do it in, but they don't know it, because every night there is entered in the ward log-book ("Occurrence Book" is its official name), "Cells searched, Nos. ——." This is one of the typical hypocrisies of a thoroughly hypocritical system—a system devised to catch the public eye and screen the superior officials at the expense of the working staff. This lying, or quasi-lying, report is made up daily, but there is another report which, if I remember rightly, is made fortnightly, from which we can drop the word "quasi" altogether. It is prepared by the principal officer in charge of the hall, and is signed by the subordinate officer in charge of every landing or ward, and countersigned by the principal officer, and it sets out specifically (I can quote the exact wording if my statement be challenged) that all cells have been carefully searched and that everything has been found correct. This report goes in as a matter of course, and is accepted as a matter of course, and as a matter of course nothing further is ever thought or ever heard about it—unless something happens.

But should something occur, something which will show that a prisoner must have had some prohibited article in his cell, woe to the unhappy subordinate who has committed himself to this smug, conventional lie! He will certainly be either suspended, censured, fined, reduced, or dismissed, and the superior officer who has connived at it will hold up his hands at the dreadful duplicity of the people under him! When I speak of "superior officers" in this connection, let it be well understood that I am not referrring to governors or deputy-governors, for they really know very little of the actual working of the machine over which they conscientiously and vigilantly

preside. The superior officers who do know are the chief warders. They have been through the mill themselves, and are up to every trick of the trade. When they were assistant warders, warders, and principal warders they themselves signed these reports, and now that they are chief warders they receive and pass them on, I presume, to the governors, knowing quite well all about them—all their worth, or, rather, all their worthlessness.

There are other and occasional and exceptional searches which I need not dwell upon. They are exceptional, and are doubtless amply justified by exceptional circumstances. If tobacco should be detected, or even reasonably suspected, if a prisoner should be regarded (as I was at the last General Election) as knowing more of what was passing in the outside world than would be consistent with a total deprivation of all newspapers, such exceptional circumstances quite warrant, in my opinion, an exceptional search. In my case it may interest the reader to know that the store cell, over which I presided at that time, was "turned over" by a very knowing old principal warder, assisted by two or three convicts. They carefully felt over one by one some scores of garments, jackets, breeches, waistcoats, guernseys, slops, leggings and caps. They put their hands into, say, a hundred pairs of very dirty boots and shoes. They actually opened a packet of prison candles; in fact, they did not leave a stone, or, rather, a store, unturned, and after having devoted a whole afternoon to the foray they got nothing for their pains. That principal warder was effusively courteous to me afterwards. I do not suppose he thought his suspicions had been quite unfounded; he was not the man to think himself mistaken, as he ought to have done, but he imagined that I had been too clever for him even, and that I was therefore worthy of extraordinary respect.

There was one hideous practice which was in full vogue at Portland when I was there, and which I am compelled very reluctantly to refer to, for if I passed it over in silence, as I should like to do, I should altogether fail to make the reader realize what penal servitude at Portland then meant. The most offensive and degrading features of this practice have since, I am happy to say, been considerably mitigated, but they were in full force up to the end of 1897 at least, and this is in itself a terrible reflection on Home Office methods. The practice I refer to was the method of searching which is known among prisoners and warders as "the dry bath."

I have said that I refer to this subject with regret, and only under a sense of duty. It will always be horrible to me to remember that I was ever subjected to such degradation. I carefully concealed it at the time from my friends, even from my grown-up son, and I am truly sorry that they should learn about it now.

Once a month every working party is searched by the process known as the "dry bath." The exact day in the month when the search is to be made is always kept a secret, known only, I believe, to the chief warder and his clerk; and it is, of course, carefully concealed from the prisoners who form the party, and also even from the warder who is in charge of it. The search is intended to come as much as possible as a surprise, but this is not very practicable, for the fact that the search is a monthly search is known to every one. A zealous chief warder, or rather probably the clerk, who "devils" for him, can, however, find opportunities to exercise his ingenuity in devising surprises even under these unfavourable conditions. Although the search is a monthly search, it does not follow that there need be the exact interval of a month between each consecutive search. Sometimes it

takes place at the beginning, sometimes in the middle, and sometimes at the end of a month. I have known two separate monthly searches take place on two consecutive days.

This is considered by prisoners a particularly dirty trick. Thus, the May search might take place on May 31 and the June search on June 1. Moreover, the limitation of once a month is by no means absolute, nor does it proceed from any humane desire to spare prisoners the mental distress and suffering which the process inflicts. It is due entirely to the fact that as the parties are numerous, and the process lengthy, there is only just time enough in the month to search every party once.

This was how the "dry bath" search was carried out at Portland in my time. As the party of men to be searched was being marched back from labour to its parade ground for dismissal to the cells, it would be met by a principal warder, who would utter the single word "Baths." (One vulture-faced principal, universally known among officers and prisoners as "Old Nosey," and as universally abhorred and dreaded, especially revelled in presiding over this "dry bath.") The direction of the party would at once be changed, and instead of proceeding to the parade ground, the party would march to one of the exceedingly well-appointed ranges of bath-houses, which were among the few creditable features of the Portland establishment.

On the party moving along in its new direction, it would be joined, apparently casually, but, of course, designedly, by several assistant warders, mostly junior members of the staff, men engaged in supernumerary duties, that is to say, in all kinds of odd jobs. These would place themselves on each flank of the party and watch its ranks closely, so as to ensure, if possible, that no prisoner, foreseeing that a

search was imminent, should get rid of any contraband article that might be in his possession; of course, in spite of all the vigilance of the warders, this sometimes happens.

Arrived in front of the baths, the party was halted and formed up into the regulation double rank, and ordered to "stand at ease." The supernumerary warders, who had escorted the party in the manner just indicated, would then disappear rapidly inside the bath-house. The principal warder, who had given the ominous word "Baths," and who was the superior officer in charge of the search, then took up a position at the door of the bath-house, where he would be able to keep an eye on the prisoners standing at ease outside the bath-house, and on what was going on inside. At the word, "First ten men" (or, as the case may be, "first twelve" or "first twenty men"), the numbers indicated broke off from their ranks and entered the bath-house. As they entered they found an assistant warder stationed at the door of every bath-room or compartment, and each man would be directed to enter a separate bath-room. The commands given will best indicate the disgusting business that then went on, it being, of course, understood that the assistant warder stood close by and carefully watched the prisoner.

"Take off your boots." "Get into the bath, it's quite dry." "Now take off all your clothes." "Throw them on the floor, outside the bath." "What are you stopping for? I told you 'all your clothes.'" "Your shirt and underclothing?" "Yes, everything." "Now, that's right." The wretched prisoner was now stark-naked. "Open your legs wide—stretch out your arms high above your head—don't mind me, it has to be done. Open your mouth wide, so that I can see inside it. Turn about, stoop down, and touch your feet with your fingers. Keep like that until I tell you to move."

During this time the warder, while closely observing his victim, carefully fingered the stockings and underclothing. "That'll do. Here, put on your stockings and your drawers. Hurry up, there's lots more to come," and so, garment after garment having been minutely examined by the warder, they were handed back to the prisoner, who, often shivering with cold and invariably trembling with shame at the ordeal he has passed through, resumed his clothing as best he might. Then he emerged from the "dry bath," and was told to put on his boots, but not to lace them up till he was outside the bath-house.

So soon as he was clear of the infernal place another prisoner entered, and the horrid performance recommenced and was repeated until every prisoner in the party had gone through this degrading experience.

I should only insult my readers by attempting to provoke their indignation or to excite their sympathy by dwelling on the foregoing details, which I have preferred thus to indicate rather than describe. If the reader will only pause as he reads each order, so as to realize what it meant and what it involved—of degradation to the unhappy prisoner and outraged delicacy to the reluctant warder—he will need no words of mine to stimulate his indignation and his horror.

The only further comment I will make on the "dry bath" search, as it was practised when I was at Portland, is to call attention to the wording of the standing orders: "The searching of a prisoner shall be conducted with due regard to decency and self-respect." And I will ask my readers whether either decency or self-respect could possibly be preserved under that method.

Fancy the working of the official mind which could deem such an abomination as consistent with the standing orders requiring the utmost decency and propriety in the treat-

ment of convicts. I shall doubtless be told that this revelation is now quite out of date, that the method has been modified and improved, that its more objectionable features have been done away with, and that there is no use in dilating upon grievances which no longer exist. That is, of course, the conventional official style of stifling discussion, and of glossing over and minimizing disagreeable disclosures. But I am writing a narrative of my own personal experiences of penal servitude. I have myself repeatedly endured this indignity, and I shall be believed when I declare that it was, beyond everything, the most painful and most humiliating of all my experiences. My narrative would, therefore, be incomplete without it. Moreover, the fact that the evil has been mitigated is practically an official admission that it was unnecessary, that the repeated, and for many long years unavailing, protests of convicts against it were well founded, and that the authorities who disregarded these protests showed themselves callously indifferent to decency and humanity.

If the practice is admitted to be objectionable now, it was equally objectionable then, and those who permitted and sanctioned it then ought not to escape from well-deserved discredit and censure.

I can truly say for myself that every time I was subjected to this "dry bath" torture I returned to my cell in a pitiable condition of humiliation and despair. I was absolutely unmanned.

I have said that this was a regular monthly experience; but if it happened that any tool used by any party in its work should by any chance be missing, the dry bath might be repeated daily, or even twice or thrice a day indefinitely until the missing tool was found. For some reason of this sort, we of No. 3—the tinsmith's party—were once searched in thi way on three successive days.

Our regular warder, the kindly, practical, and experienced officer whom I have already referred to, was absent on leave, or escort, and his place was taken by a typical, blundering and brutal assistant warder, of the genuine Portland type. This latter was believed in prison parlance to "have his knife into" No. 3 party, or rather into its warder. He either could not, or would not, satisfy himself that we had accounted for all the tools we had in use. Through his incompetence or ill-will, No. 3 party had, in consequence, to endure, while he was in charge, three extra "dry baths" on three successive days.

On our regular warder's resumption of his duties the missing tool was found, and found, I was told, in its usual place! The only comment I heard was, "Oh, it's just like ——, he always has his knife into L——" (the warder in question). Unfortunately, in this case, it was the party only that suffered, while L—— was merely annoyed.

Most prisoners at one time or another have been the victims of this kind of vicarious spite. "Why was —— 'run in' for talking?" I once asked an orderly in the printers' party, who replied quite as a matter of course, "Oh, M—— (another warder) has recently had some half-sheets; he is always coming late, and he's only getting his own back again." I ought to explain that when an officer is reported to the Governor for any breach of official discipline, the complaint is notified to him upon a half-sheet of official foolscap paper, upon which he has then to indite his "answer" or excuse. Hence, an officer who is reported is invariably said to have "got a half-sheet."

Since I first related the horrors of the "dry bath" as it was administered at Portland, a remark has been made to me, by a warder of great experience and tact, a man who is a model of the younger and better type of warder, which I cannot refrain from mentioning—a remark which I

respectfully commend to the attention of the Home Secretary, the directors of convict prisons, the Legislature, the Humanitarian League, the Howard Society, and all who are concerned in prison reform. "I hope you will make it plain that a lot of this searching is all rot, and is as much disliked by 'screws' as by 'lags.' Every decent new hand among us gets the hump when he finds he is expected to put his hands into men's pockets, and to fumble about their bodies and legs. The first week I had to do it I was so ashamed of myself that I almost resolved to throw up the job, and but for the missis and children I would have done so. But the worst of it is that after a month or so I found myself taking quite naturally to work from which at first I regularly shrank. This can't be a good thing for 'screws' themselves."

Of course, and indeed, it is not a good thing, but the reverse, and the fact that the natural and wholesome feelings of decent men are thus deadened and demoralized goes far to account for the cruelty of "Noseys" and others who made Portland infamous. It was the vile Portland system which begat and created the brutal Portland warder. The system has been modified, and lo, the improved character of the warders reflects the change in the system!

Now, having dealt with the horrors of the "dry bath," as I endured them at Portland, I will describe the existing and less objectionable manner in which it is at present administered at Parkhurst, and doubtless also at Portland and other convict stations. The change is a simple but suggestive one. The prisoner is now no longer compelled to strip stark-naked; he is allowed to retain his shirt, and he is not subjected to the outrage of being bound to stoop in the way I have just described. This is an enormous change for the better. The "dry bath" is still a very

trying, and, I think, needless, experience, but it is no longer grossly revolting and indecent. I would, however, earnestly appeal to the Home Secretary not to abolish but to suspend for, say, six months the continuance of this practice. Even as modified it is still very painful, very harassing, very humiliating, and, I firmly believe, very useless. It is mainly directed against tobacco, but the results are practically nil. Tobacco which can be secreted in the mouth can also, if necessary, be bolted, and no convict who indulges in the filthy habit of chewing would hesitate for a moment to swallow his "quid" in order to escape report and punishment.

If the result of the six months' suspension I am pleading for should be satisfactory, the "dry bath" might, at the end of that period, be abolished; but if it were otherwise, the practice could be at once resumed, all complaints would be silenced, and, as in many other cases, prisoners would only have themselves to thank for the retention of an admitted hardship.

As to the efficiency of searching, I remember that I had an acquaintance at Portland with a very worthy man who was undergoing an iniquitously severe sentence. I shall mention the details of his case when I come to deal with the worst feature in the administration of English criminal law, the iniquitous inequality of sentences. I mention him here because when we parted at Portland on the conclusion of his imprisonment, he presented me, as a token of respect and as a friendly souvenir, with the most minute lead pencil I have ever seen in my life, and which he had succeeded in preserving in safety through all the searches to which he had been exposed in that establishment. Of course, minute as it was, he had not dared to keep it on him. He had, I suppose, secreted it in some safe corner of the tinsmith's shop. I could but accept the

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pencil with gratitude, but I took the earliest opportunity after he left of losing it. But, after all, I am convinced that the most common form of communication between prisoners is by word of mouth, and I think this opinion will be confirmed by all who have undergone long sentences of penal servitude.

My time at Portland passed somewhat heavily on my hands. I was treated with much kindness by many of my fellow-prisoners. The officer of our party was, as I have said, an able, kindly and sagacious man, one of those men whose good sense taught him when to tolerate and when to curb, when to shut his eyes, and when to keep them wide open. With the exception of the officer under whom I was for some years at Parkhurst, I never met a better officer than Warder L—— at Portland. Of course, possessing all these rare and exceptional qualities, he was not a favourite with his immediate superiors (good officers rarely are), and he never obtained the promotion to which he was entitled by seniority and by long years of faithful service. But he treated this philosophically. He had been a saving man all his life, and in the goodness of his heart and the integrity of his principles deliberately preferred not to be promoted, rather than to purchase promotion by servility to superiors and severity to subordinates.

I think he was especially disliked by the principal warder, whose duty it was to make frequent periodical visits to the tinsmith's shop. This was no discredit to L——, for that principal warder disliked most people. The only favourite he had was a "star" prisoner, a lifer, who had the distinction of being what is called a "red collar man," that is to say, a man who is allowed to work alone and out of ight of an officer, and who wears a red collar as a mark o this privilege. The principal and he were very good

friends indeed, and I was surprised one Monday by the "red collar man" remarking to me quite casually, "Balfour, you are going to London next week." "Nonsense," I said; "why should I be going to London? I have heard nothing about it." "Well, I know you are going. Old D—— told me so, and he is going to take you." I did not for a moment believe it, and as the week passed on and I heard nothing about it, I assumed that it was, to use a term very current in prison, "only a prison lie."

I was sitting in my cell on the Saturday, when, to my surprise, the doctor, a very amiable and able man, who is now the head of the infirmary at Parkhurst, entered and said, "Well, Balfour, how are you? How are you getting on?" I imagined this to be a mere passing visit. I thanked him, and said that I was not feeling very well, but that I had nothing to necessitate troubling him. He went through the usual formula of applying the stethoscope to the chest, punching, probing, feeling the pulse, and inspecting the tongue, and remarked, "Ah, it's this east wind. Your liver is a little out of order. Come and see me in the middle of next week if you are not better." I thanked him. He retired, and I thought to myself, "Well, that shows I'm not going up to London, for if I were he wouldn't have told me to see him next week." Little did I know the wiles of prison authorities! This passing visit, as I supposed it to be, was actually nothing less than the inspection by the medical officer which every prisoner has to undergo before leaving a prison, and the injunction to call upon him next week was simply a pleasing little official subterfuge to throw dust in my eyes, and to keep me in ignorance of what was in store for me. (Why? the reader will ask. I must refer him to the medical officer. I cannot tell.)

The following day was Sunday. I went to church as

usual, ate my Sunday dinner, which at that time was of a particularly uninviting character, and was just settling myself to read when the cell door opened. The principal warder entered, and said, "Balfour, you are wanted at the separate cells." I had no idea of what being wanted at the separate cells meant, especially on a Sunday. I thought it had something to do with reports and punishments. I took up my cap, and proceeded with the principal as ordered. It was quite a relief to me to find that I wasn't taken to one of the punishment cells, but was placed in a cell on the upper landing.

I knew the Warder-in-charge. As he was closing the door, he remarked, "So you are back again." "I am," I said. "But can you tell me why?" "What, don't you know?" he cried. "I haven't the faintest idea." "Why," said he, and he turned and leant over the railing to see that there was nobody on the ground floor landing, and then he looked carefully along the upper landing to be sure that nobody was observing us. Satisfied as to this, he put his lips close to my ears and whispered, "Why, you are going to London to-morrow."

Incidentally, what happened to me that Sunday afternoon at Portland afforded a capital illustration of the secrecy and reserve, not to say contempt, with which convicts, however orderly and well-conducted they may be, are treated. I need hardly stop to point out that such secrecy and reserve answer no good purpose, their only effect is to humiliate, discourage, and harass their victims. This was, as my reader may recall, a repetition of what happened to me at Parkhurst when I was hurried thence to Portland. The information as to my impending removal was communicated to me not by the Governor, nor by any other person in authority, but by a fellow-prisoner. The news was carefully withheld from the man it seriously

affected and imparted carelessly to a prisoner whom it did not concern, and through whom it reached me none the less surely because informally and at second hand. Is this the way to discourage communication between prisoners? I imagine that there cannot be two opinions as to the folly of this conduct. I am sure there can be but one as to its cruelty and impropriety.

Shortly after my arrival at the separate cells I was carefully and closely searched (I never could imagine why), and then I discovered that in the ordinary course I should be left in absolute idleness and seclusion to spend the whole remainder of a dull November Sunday without any occupation whatever, and without even a book to read. The prospect was so depressing that I implored the officer to try and find me any kind of book, anything to occupy my mind. He consented good-naturedly, and after a short delay brought me Lord Beaconsfield's *Life of Lord George Bentinck*. As an intellectual exercise I confess this more than reconciled me to the loss of the afternoon sermon, and I hurried through its brilliant pages so as to finish it before the close of the day.

Next morning, immediately after the bell had sounded, my friend the warder came in and remarked, rather apologetically, as I thought, "I must now search you again." "Oh, all right," I replied. "But I should very much like to know why. It's no pleasure to you, and I am sure it's no pleasure to me. You searched me yesterday afternoon when I entered the cell, and I haven't left it since. What can I have found, manufactured, or secreted in the meantime?" He laughed, and admitted it was all nonsense, but it was the rule; so I was again searched, and searched very thoroughly, the idea being, I suppose, to guard against any written communication passing out of the prison. My breakfast, which consisted of a

small loaf of brown bread and a pint of gruel, was served to me, and after this somewhat uninviting preparation for a long railway journey, I was taken down to the prison gates and handed over to the principal warder, whom I have already mentioned, and who, accompanied by an assistant warder, escorted me to town.

We drove in a small omnibus to the railway station at the foot of the great Bill of Portland. As we passed through the streets my mind was filled with the presentiment that I should never see the place again as a prisoner. Of course I was handcuffed. I say "of course," because under the Standing Orders it was a matter of course. But it is none the less an act of wanton cruelty, inflicting terrible mental torture. Surely two officers armed with swords may be depended upon to ensure the safe custody of an underfed, elderly man, whose grotesque garb, dotted all over with broad arrows, is itself the best possible preventive of escape.

It was Monday, November 8, 1897. The weather was dull, and although I eagerly looked through the carriage window at the country which we passed, the prospect was dismal to the last degree. I have had many strange railway journeys. I once spent the best part of a day and the first part of a night in a huge snowdrift on the line between Vienna and Venice, but I never had so depressing a railway journey as this. I was going up to London, where and why I knew not. I felt utterly lonely and deserted. The officers who took me were as indifferent to what was before me as if they were drovers in charge of a herd of cattle. With them it was merely a matter of business to be got over as quickly as possible. With me it was a return to the great city in whose busy life I had played so active a part. I really believe that the principal warder meant to be amiable and civil, according

to his lights. But, like the heathen Chinee, he was "peculiar." He was a garrulous man who talked all the way up in a gruff voice on nearly every conceivable subject, and he was evidently determined to keep the conversation practically to himself, for he sternly contradicted every remark or reply which I tried to slip in edgeways.

When we got to Waterloo we had another painful experience. So soon as the train reached the platform we alighted and were forced to elbow our way in search of a cab through the usual crowd of passengers and their friends, and through many confused heaps of luggage. This is never a very pleasant operation. It involves a certain degree of roughness, and generally provokes a good deal of remonstrance and attention. If this be the case with an ordinary party of passengers, how much is the attention likely to be increased when two of the party are officers clad in a somewhat unfamiliar uniform, and the third is an elderly grey-haired man in convict garb and handcuffed? Of course, we were soon followed by a string of hangers-on and idlers, who were greatly interested in our proceedings, and from whose attentions we only escaped when we at last found a somewhat tardy and difficult refuge in a station growler. Indeed, some of the young gentlemen were so excited that they followed us some distance on foot along the Waterloo Road.

My ride across London from Waterloo to Pentonville Prison afforded me a passing glimpse of a few of the huge public buildings with which my own name was associated, particularly with the Hotel Cecil and Whitehall Court. And I also saw for the first time some of the great changes in the Bloomsbury district then just commencing. The motor-bus and motor-car were still unheard of, or, at all events, I saw none of them. If I remember rightly,

flaring placards of the earlier editions of the evening papers were devoted to the fortunes of the English cricket team in Australia.

Doubtless we were expected at Pentonville. The great gates opened slowly and noiselessly, and closed directly the threshold had been cleared. The gatekeeper wrote my name and the hour of my arrival in his register, the principal warder on duty received me. I entered the great hall or rotunda, from which the various wings of this vast prison radiate, and was taken to a quiet and secluded cell. Here I had my first experience of the unfailing courtesy, good feeling, and humanity which I experienced from every officer I met at Pentonville. It was the dinner hour. I don't know whether it is by accident or design that most prisoners arrive at prison during the dinner hour. In this case, of course, the dinners had been served, but the Pentonville officer refused to bother himself about the change of my clothing which the Portland officers were anxious to effect, until he had procured a proper meal for me from the kitchen. Then I changed my clothing, the Portland officers collected the Portland apparel, took a receipt for my body, and hurried off. They were all agog to be rid of me and to be free to enjoy the delights of a "day off" in town.

# CHAPTER IX

## PENTONVILLE

ACCORDING to my custom, I borrowed a book from the officer, and awaited with interest the further formalities attending my arrival. During the course of the day I had visits from the Governor, the chaplain, and the assistant doctor, and was ultimately assigned a large and well-lit, but very cold cell on the ground floor. I was struck by one remark of the principal warder who led me to it. He said, "You will find this cell fairly comfortable, as cells go, and it has one great merit—it is clean." The remark startled me somewhat, for I had always entertained the popular notion that our prisons were, after our warships, the cleanest places under the sun, and at Wormwood Scrubbs, and in a less degree at Portland, I had noticed the evident and urgent attention which was given to cleanliness. The cells at Wormwood Scrubbs were scrubbed out every other day, and at Portland once a week at least. Therefore cleanliness was the normal and creditable condition of those establishments, a condition so normal that it was treated as a matter of course, and I don't think any warder at Wormwood Scrubbs or Portland would have deemed it necessary to describe a cell as clean. That would be an adjective which need not be expressed, for it was universally understood.

In my interview with the Governor I was informed of

the reason for my removal from Portland to London. I was to prepare and file a statement of accounts preparatory to an examination in bankruptcy. It is not necessary to dwell on the folly and injustice of expecting any satisfactory performance of these duties from a man treated as a convict and deprived of free and adequate access to books, papers, and friends. It is so obvious an absurdity (and a cruel absurdity) that I will not discuss it here, especially as it would involve me in purely personal details relating to my own affairs (as distinguished from my prison experiences) to which I have resolved not to refer more than is absolutely necessary.

I confess that on this subject I adhere to that resolution with some reluctance, for the administration of the bankruptcy laws, as it deals with prisoners who are bankrupt, comes strictly within the main purpose of this narrative, and I could say much about the treatment accorded to prisoners by the bankruptcy authorities, and the hauteur, not to say insolence, of their tone.

This is a matter which well deserves notice. Englishmen are especially apt to resent official insolence, which, if unchallenged and unchecked, would soon be as dominant here as it is in Germany. The quasi-judicial functions exercised by the bankruptcy department of the Board of Trade do not relieve the department from the obligations of courtesy and decorum which the general public (including even prisoners) have the right to expect from public servants.

Here I will content myself with saying that no one who has not passed through the mill can form any adequate conception of the high-handed, autocratic behaviour of these functionaries, their alternate bullying and condescension, their obsequiousness when they want assistance, and

their neglect of the ordinary courtesies of life when they have obtained it.

To resume my experiences at Pentonville, I was visited next morning by the doctor, who, with my "medical record" in his hand, went through the inquiries with which I had now become familiar, and which, I suppose, are practically stereotyped. I recall this visit with pleasure, for it was my first introduction to a most remarkable and able man, and, so far as I can judge, one of the most original and efficient of all the higher prison officials with whom I came in contact during my long incarceration. It would be difficult to find a more hard-worked or more capable public servant.

To look out upon the great metropolis from the standpoint of its principal prison is indeed a weird and striking experience; the immensity of London, its enormous and varied population, its profuse wealth, its abject poverty, with all the grades between these two extremes, its enormous criminal class and the persistency and diversity of its crimes—all these make up an ever-changing spectacle, a drama, a tragedy, pulsating alike with pathos and with humour, and this tragedy, this drama, is enacted every day in this great city! There is nothing like Pentonville Prison in the kingdom. I believe there is nothing quite like it in the world. Sixty thousand prisoners per annum enter and leave its portals—a floating population made up of the scum of London.

The post of Governor of such an establishment is far from being a sinecure. But think of the post of doctor!

In receiving within its walls every kind of petty criminal it receives at the same time every form of human suffering, degradation, filth, disease, poverty, and vice. A little carelessness, a little neglect, a little indifference would make it a very hotbed of contagious epidemic, and the controlling

brain which has kept and is keeping it a centre of wholesome sanitation belongs to the public-spirited and high-minded public servant, the devoted medical man before whom I stood. I saw him but rarely, for he was far too busy a man to have time for superfluous visits, and far too conscientious to neglect any of his multitudinous duties.

From the first I watched the strange life around me with a keen and absorbing interest. The prisoners whom I exercised with were altogether different from the class of men whom I had met at Parkhurst or Portland. The number of "star" prisoners is very small indeed when compared with the vast number of habitual prisoners. It will be scarcely credited that about 1000 prisoners enter and leave Pentonville every week, and nothing could be more interesting, nothing more worthy of the pencil of a Hogarth or a Cruikshank, than the squalid hosts of dilapidated and broken-down beings who are daily deposited by "Black Maria" within its walls, and who pass in single file through the exercise yard on their way to the inevitable and most certainly all too indispensable bath. They include elderly, grey-haired men who have been out all night "on the spree," and who have been picked up by the police—

> "In the alleys and lanes where misfortune and guilt
> Their children have gathered, their city have built;"

sorry rakes in soiled and dirty shirt-fronts and mud-bespattered evening dress; gutter-sparrows with scarcely a rag to conceal their nakedness; cunning-faced lads; pickpockets and petty thieves from Houndsditch, and bullies from the West End; all the scourings and filth of the great city; all are found, all take their places in this daily dismal, squalid rogues' march. Many of them have

been up all night, few have slept, all are innocent of soap. "Unwashed, uncombed, unbarbered," they constitute a grimy procession of villainy and vice. Most of them affect a jaunty air; some even tender a mocking greeting to the prisoners at exercise, but it is not necessary to be specially observant to discover that this levity is far from being genuine. Wretchedness—anxious, squalid wretchedness of mind, body and estate—is the prevailing characteristic of these dismal processions, of these unsightly parades of drink, dishonesty, and disease.

I tried to settle down to my life at Pentonville, but failed. I broke down altogether. It certainly was not for want of trying nor for want of subjects to occupy my mind. Of these I had enough, and, indeed, more than enough. I had to prepare, verify, and dispute accounts, to expose lying affidavits, and to resist attempts at barefaced extortion. I never had any experience in my life more trying to the temper, nor more calculated to make a man despise his fellow-creatures. The fact that I had been made a bankrupt by a transparent legal artifice, that I was a convict undergoing a long sentence of penal servitude, and therefore unlikely to be able to defend my estate with success, seemed especially to attract the gentry who frequent the bankruptcy court.

All the income-tax collectors, liquidators, and tradesmen who were in any way interested in any of the companies with which my name had been so disastrously associated, seemed inflamed with a common desire to flood my estate with unheard-of and unfounded claims—claims which were all (be it well understood) "verified by affidavit." It is quite appalling to think of the number of people who called God to witness that I "well and truly" owed quite imaginary debts. Such, for example, as claims for income-tax on directors' fees which I had never received, and which, to

the best of my knowledge, had never been distributed. And if this was appalling, it was equally amusing to observe how these deponents scurried to withdraw their "proofs" as soon as they found I was determined to resist them. To these were added some miserable instances of the evasion by chicanery and fraud of previously recognized obligations and liabilities. I had also to interview solicitors and accountants, and to set on foot inquiries I could not myself conduct. So that I had plenty to do—plenty to relieve the monotony of prison life.

My friend and counsel, Mr. John O'Connor, came frequently to see me. It was owing to his firmness and determination that the courts had overruled the objection of the official liquidator in bankruptcy, acting as the trustee of my estate, who had actually wished to prevent my undergoing my statutory examination. But for Mr. O'Connor's courage, pertinacity, and ability in this matter, my estate would have been wound up with all kinds of mysterious problems unsolved, problems which I was enabled to clear up the very moment my attention was directed to them.

I found the conditions of prison life at Pentonville very inferior to Portland in two most important respects. The air of that crowded district of London, especially in winter, is not to be compared with the bracing and exhilarating atmosphere of Portland, and the facilities for exercise at Pentonville are much more limited. I suppose it is not, therefore, to be wondered at that a man of my age, who had undergone during the past two years experiences such as I had, and who was still exposed to the distressing and harassing conditions of my life at that time, exchanging, moreover, pure air for impure air and ample exercise for scanty exercise, should succumb under such a strain. I suspected that I was being watched rather closely as

regarded my state of health. The inquiries were more frequent and particular than I had been accustomed to at Portland, and when one morning, about a month after my arrival, I told the principal officer in charge, a most kind and able man, that I was not feeling quite up to the mark, he strongly advised me to see the doctor. This had never entered my head, and I laughingly declined. But that principal warder was not to be denied.

As I did not speak to the doctor, he did, with the result that I was sent for quite early one morning and subjected to a highly characteristic examination by that very active and vigorous official. There was evidently something about my state of health which he did not like, for, much to my surprise, when I thought he was going to send me back to my cell, he intimated his intention to order me into hospital. He was not a man to gainsay or oppose, so into hospital I went, and there I stopped for over four months. I had, to use a conventional but expressive term, been running down ever since I got to Pentonville, and during the first week of my stay in hospital I ran down still quicker. I remember mentioning to a friend who visited me that I was feeling precisely the same symptoms as had preceded a very severe and well-nigh fatal illness from which I suffered in 1884.

The following day I had to undergo the severe ordeal of my first interview since my conviction with my only surviving brother. That would have been in any case a bitter trial. Though very dissimilar in our tastes and pursuits, we had always been very close friends, and the affection which he bore me—for he was one of the best of brothers—had not been dimmed or diminished, but strikingly increased by my ruin. If that interview was a trial to me, it was a double trial to him. In order to enable him to go through with it at all, I found myself

called upon to exercise the utmost self-control and composure and to assume a cheerfulness and hopefulness which I was far from feeling. I shall never forget our meeting and our parting that day. When I returned to my cell I felt as if I had lost every atom of energy and vitality. There were a heap of accounts on my table, but it was hopeless to attack them. The doctor had ordered me additional nourishment, but I turned from it with loathing.

So soon as the day nurse had gone off duty and the night nurse had entered on his task, I told him that I was not feeling so well, and would go to bed. He assented, and remarked with a readiness which surprised me at the time, "I think you'd better, and when you are in bed I shall come and take your temperature." "All right," I replied; "I've been through all that before. I know all about it." He started and looked at me with strange surprise.

I was in that curious condition of mind which, I dare say, most people who have been seriously ill are familiar with, when the attention is preternaturally acute, but finds no corresponding expression in speech. Shortly after I had got to bed the nurse came in, handed me a clinical thermometer, and told me to put it in my mouth. That is never a very inviting process. I suggested that I should put it under my arm instead. He assented, rather gruffly, as I thought. I did as we had arranged, and, as he had several other cells to visit, he left me thus engaged.

In a few minutes he returned, came to my bedside, himself withdrew the thermometer, looked at it, started in surprise, shook his head mournfully and exclaimed, "None of your larks; this won't do." "What won't do?" I said with surprise. "Why," he replied, "I never thought you were a chap who knew how to fake the thermometer, or I wouldn't have left you." "Fake the thermometer!"

I said. "What do you mean?" "Why," he replied, "I mean this. You've overdone it this time; it's gone up much too high."

I was as surprised as he was. I told him that I had done nothing to the thermometer, and he said, "Oh, of course not. However," he added, "I'll take it again. And I'll stop in the cell and see how it comes out then." I made no objection. With much care and elaboration he reset the thermometer, again suggested the mouth, which I again declined, restored it to its position under my arm, and watched me from that moment as closely as a cat watches a mouse. He was quite free to do so. I had not enough vitality in me to show how amused I felt. He waited what I suppose was the orthodox time, again withdrew the thermometer, looked at it, and exclaimed, "By Jove! I beg your pardon. You never faked it at all. Why, your temperature is up ever so high!"

As is often the case with these attacks of fever, I suffered little pain, but much discomfort and intolerable thirst. The doctor and assistant doctor were unremitting in their attentions. I was always wondering why they took so much trouble with me, but one evening between eight and nine I woke up suddenly from a disturbed and troubled sleep to find the doctor seated by my bedside and watching me intently. Then I think I realized that I was very ill.

During some weeks in the month of December I continued to be, I fear, the subject of a great deal of trouble and anxiety to the doctors. As my fever abated, and my attention to what was passing around me revived, I became greatly interested in the infirmary life at Pentonville. Of course, the fact that I was in a prison was never long out of my mind, and yet the infirmary there seemed really like what an infirmary ought to be,

The care and attention shown to the patients, the grip which the medical officers appeared to have over their work, were conspicuously greater than anything I had seen at Portland, or, I must add, than anything that I have since seen at Parkhurst. I think this difference is largely attributable to the striking personality of the Pentonville Prison doctor.

At Parkhurst the doctor's energies are distributed among too many channels. In a word, he is greatly overworked, and the overwork takes a specially baneful form. It is overwork not so much in amount as in its diversity—he has too many irons in the fire. He has lunatics to look after and "balmies" (weak-minded convicts) to superintend.

On the other hand, the infirmary at Pentonville is a compact, self-contained, isolated establishment, with its own staff of officers, its separate cook and separate kitchen, and with a doctor who, however much he may be called elsewhere, manages somehow to be nearly always on the spot when wanted. That certainly accounts for a great deal of the difference.

Then, again, to mention a striking but accidental difference, few sounds from the outside world other than the rush of the wind and the roaring of the sea ever reach the infirmary cells at Portland. The patient at Pentonville, on the other hand, becomes familiarized with the hubbub of the adjacent streets. As I lay in my bed I renewed my acquaintance with London "cat-calls." I heard and could almost distinguish the conversation of passers-by on the pavement, and I grew to know when the various itinerant musicians paid their periodical visits, and to marvel at the wonderful regularity and punctuality with which they adhered to their unofficial and self-appointed time-tables.

Since I have been free and travelling daily to and from town, I have often wished that my train was as punctual

as were the Saturday night visits of one particularly persistent organ-grinder, who came at the same minute, played the same tunes, stopped at the same time, and departed, as it seemed, in the same direction. Nothing hurried and nothing delayed him. I wonder if the men and women who throng this noisy street every Saturday night, who are preoccupied with the anxieties, participating in the humours, and pursuing the pleasures of the hour, I wonder if it ever dawns upon any one of them that close at hand, within earshot, a score or two of sick and solitary men are lying surrounded by all the grim precautions and gloomy appurtenances of a great prison. Little would they guess that these lonely sufferers, the flotsam and jetsam of London life, are participating, through them and with them, in the noisy scene around, and are finding a blessed relief to the monotony of their own existence in this indirect contact with the activities from which they are inexorably shut off.

By Christmas Day I had so far recovered that the doctor gladdened my heart by telling me that I might get up on Boxing Day. The prospect completely altered the aspect of that Christmas time, and, dreary as it was to spend it in a hospital, and a prison hospital, I was so exhilarated by this permission that I made light of my surroundings and quite threw off the melancholy which had hitherto weighed me down.

I have spoken about the separate infirmary kitchen at Pentonville, and I was struck with the capital way in which it was worked. The service of food to patients, always an important factor in medical treatment, was infinitely better carried out at Pentonville, so far as I could judge, than either at Portland or Parkhurst. At Parkhurst, to speak frankly, it seems to be the weakest spot in the hospital administration. The hospital rations are often badly cooked,

and imperfectly and incorrectly distributed. This is largely attributable to the fact that the kitchen is altogether apart from the infirmary, and that the meals when cooked have to be carried by the ordinary prison cooks (who have plenty of duties of their own to attend to) from the kitchen to the infirmary. In addition to the perpetual race against time in the prison kitchen, there is a kind of constant competition going on between the service of meals to prisoners and the service of meals to patients. Sometimes I suspect the patients come worst off.

A remarkably competent and well-trained hospital nurse at Parkhurst very earnestly assured me more than once that the skill of the doctors and the zeal of the nurses would never find a fair field at Parkhurst until the infirmary had its own special kitchen and special cook. He was at pains to show me that there was ample room in the infirmary for the change.

Certainly at Pentonville the success of the infirmary kitchen was most striking. I thankfully remember one evening, when I was not yet so far on the way to convalescence as to be placed upon full hospital diet, the excellent principal officer in charge of the infirmary, when making his usual evening tour of inspection, prior to "locking-up" time, was dissatisfied with my general condition. I was not looking so well as he had expected. "What have you been eating?" he said. "Two or three slices of very nice but very thin bread-and-butter," I answered, somewhat ruefully. "Oh," he exclaimed, "you need something more than that. That will never do," and he ordered me a basin of arrowroot before I went to bed. In an incredibly short space of time after the order had been given, that arrowroot was served and consumed. Now this would have been extremely difficult if not impossible at Parkhurst Infirmary without a kitchen,

or kitchen authorities or cooks of its own. There the work of the kitchen, overladen as it is with its variety of services, prevents, or, at least, hinders, anything like exceptional action in times of emergency. Looking back to that time at Pentonville, I have always felt that that arrowroot was the first substantial help to my restoration to health, and I am sure I could not have had it had I been at Parkhurst.

Speaking of hospital diet at Pentonville leads me to say a word or two about hospital diet generally; not certainly by way of complaint, for there is little complaint to make, but by way of suggestion, and also for the information of my readers, who may take an interest in the more minute details of prison life. Until I unhappily became familiar with prison infirmaries I had not the remotest idea of the importance of diet in its relation to health, and of the wonderful curative effects resulting from even a slight change of food.

It is not at all unusual to see a sturdy, strapping fellow suddenly ordered into hospital. He is pale and limp and languid. There is little light in his eyes, little colour in his cheeks. "What is the matter with that man?" you will exclaim. "He ought to be strong enough for any kind of work, at all events he is big enough." "No doubt he ought to be," is the answer, "but he has run down and is losing weight. The doctor is going to give him a bit of a rest." Now the "bit of a rest" is really only an official euphemism for a change of food. The man thus admitted to hospital will be discharged from it in a week or ten days quite a different being. His pallor will have departed, his eye will have brightened. He will have visibly put on flesh. His whole aspect will be changed. And this is not the result of physic, for he will have had but little or none. It comes entirely from change of diet.

It was my own experience more than once, and I have often racked my brain to discover wherein was the secret. For I would have my readers keep steadily in mind that, so far as the actual quantity of food is concerned, the hospital diet is frequently considerably less in amount—less in weight—and to the uninitiated it would also seem to be less nutritious, than the ordinary prison diet. I am speaking, of course, as a layman, without a shadow of professional knowledge, but this fact seems to demonstrate that the result must be due primarily to the nature of the food, and, secondarily, very secondarily, to possibly more careful cooking. In quantity, the full convict prison diet would seem ample for the wants of the very hungriest, yet comparatively moderate eaters get thin upon it; whereas on the ordinary hospital diet, which is not particularly liberal, the same men thrive and grow fat.

At Pentonville I had my first experience of what is called hospital "low" diet. I will not presume to dogmatize as to its need or value. My confidence in the medical authorities is such that I am ready to accept both on trust. I had similar experiences of low diet at Parkhurst, and cruel experiences they were—may I never know the like again. I can speak from my own sad knowledge of its inadequacy to satisfy the appetite of even a sick man. I never shall forget my astonishment at receiving a diminutive rice pudding without bread as the full complement of my day's dinner; not only did it leave a dreadful void within me, but, as its consumption only occupied two or three seconds in all, my dinner took up even less time than usual. It was distinctly trying to find one's dinner finished by 11.40 a.m. and to reflect upon the number of hours to supper-time. This is hardly a pleasant feeling when one is ill, and when food has few attractions, but it is nothing less than appalling when one is getting well.

I wonder if the doctors would scout the suggestion that probably low diet is retained chiefly as a valuable deterrent, that is to say, it is a most effective agent in deterring men from stopping in hospital a single moment longer than they can help. The straits to which its victims are reduced and the expedients to which they will resort are indeed surprising. I once had myself a striking example of this at Pentonville.

The principal officer and nurses were making a thorough and very necessary examination of the sanitary condition of the cells. As all the cells were occupied, and all the inmates in bed, the cell doors were left open, the officers being, as it were, in possession of the whole corridor. They had only left my cell a few minutes, and were engaged presumably in a cell a few doors off, when I was astounded by the apparition of a tall, wild-looking, long-haired, long-bearded man, with bare legs and feet, who had, in fact, nothing on but his shirt. I jumped up in my bed, in amazement, and exclaimed, "What on earth are you doing here? What do you want?"

The intruder stretched out his hands in an appealing manner, and cried in a piteous strain, "Oh, for the love of God, have you got anything to eat? They'll kill me on this —— low diet."

The man was literally wild with hunger. "Get out of the cell at once," I cried, "and I'll see what I can do for you." I had a little bread-and-butter by me, and as soon as he had got into the corridor I jumped out of bed and put it into his outstretched hand. He clutched it ravenously. "God bless you!" he cried. "I shall never forget your kindness."

I shall never forget that incident.

I have just spoken of the overpowering interest that a vast prison like Pentonville, situated in the heart of a great

city, is calculated to awaken, and if I revert to the subject now, it is because, as I look back upon all my prison experiences, I find, to my own surprise, that it is Pentonville which most impressed my imagination, and this, be it understood, notwithstanding the comparative shortness of my stay there.

The dominant characteristic of Portland and Parkhurst are their deadly dulness, their monstrous monotony, a monotony that is so palpable that it can almost be felt and handled, a monotony which leads to suicide and attempts at suicide, and which conduces to every form of insanity. Of course, we hear a great deal about suicides. They cannot be ignored. Coroners' inquests must be held, and coroners' juries, however discreetly chosen, will talk. The echo of such mournful inquiry reaches the London Press through the activity of their local correspondents. But we rarely hear of unsuccessful "attempts" at suicide. These can be kept quiet, though, from the point of view of the public, it is the circumstances which provoke the attempt and not its success or failure which are of public interest.

But there is neither dulness nor monotony at Pentonville. The place seems to vibrate with life. People are coming and going all day long. Its corridors are rarely silent. The rattling of keys, the jangling of chains, the opening and shutting of doors are heard continually. Pentonville brings home to the wonder-stricken mind, as nothing else, I think, can, the bewildering vastness of London. The diversity, not to say the incongruity of its multitudinous phases of social life; its extremes of wealth and affluence, of poverty and distress, and all the various grades of society which lie between these extremes; good and bad, rich and poor, healthy and sickly, all are gathered in London into a struggling, heterogeneous and discordant

whole. Now, just as these complex elements are diffused over the entire area of London, so they all seem to be concentrated—to be focussed—in its great prison; all find their representatives in the shabby processions which daily enter in at the great gates, shambling along towards its uninviting baths, and disappear in its gloomy cells.

This is not the place, nor am I the person, to dilate on the moral aspects of this dismal panorama. I leave that to others. My task is more humble, but, I imagine, quite as useful. I am seeking to make the public realize how crime and criminals look when beheld from the inside of prisons, and how prison life appears to a man who has felt and endured it. If I succeed in this, I shall have done my share in the good work. I shall have prepared the way for reformers and philanthropists.

Take a single illustration. There is as much diversity of disease in this vast Pentonville Prison as there is in a great London hospital. And it is to be remembered that while in the latter there is every opportunity for painstaking study and careful diagnosis, the daily rush in the prison is such that the doctor must content himself with a hurried glance, a short and searching question.

Through long experience of working under such conditions, the medical officer at Pentonville has acquired the wonderful—to an onlooker it seems like the miraculous—faculty of reading at a glance not only the physical condition of the men who file before him, but also their social status and general habits. He can "spot" a gentleman disguised in the garb of a street arab and a professional burglar made up as a High Church clergyman. The records of many years demonstrate that he is very rarely mistaken. It will also appear strange to many that, thanks to Dr. Wilson's wonderful insight, his vigour, his promptitude, and his fertility of resource, he has made Pentonville

one of the healthiest (I do not say pleasantest) places of residence in the United Kingdom. Notwithstanding the unnatural lives which most of its inhabitants have led, their drink, their debauchery, their dirt, their hunger, their cold; notwithstanding their mental twists, their moral flaws, their physical freaks, the doctor seems to be able to evoke order out of chaos, cleanliness out of filth, decency out of depravity.

All this impressed me greatly, directly I grew well enough to resume my habits of observation. Happily, the evils which I have enumerated above as especially characteristic of Pentonville are exceptions—rare exceptions—I would hope, in the ordinary walks of life. Little known, if at all, by the comfortable classes, these evils are, if not quite so uncommon, the exception still among the poor. Any one who wishes to see with his own eyes the darker side of human life will best attain his object in the exercise grounds of Pentonville Prison and within the four walls of its infirmary.

Take, for example, the effects of drink. We are all unfortunately familiar with the sight of drunken men. We all know that drink is the prime, though certainly not the sole factor in every phase of human wretchedness. We speak quite freely of delirium tremens; everybody knows all about it in theory. Indeed, the words are in such common use that we find them too long for colloquial purposes, and talk of "D.T.'s" and the "shakes" and "the jumps" instead. Yet I imagine, I certainly hope, that in most walks of life people do not know much about delirium tremens as a matter of practical experience or observation. Now in the infirmary at Pentonville everything about it is known; delirium tremens is quite an every-day occurrence. It is indigenous to the soil. It is looked upon so much as a matter of course, it is so pre-

valent, that there are special cells appropriated, set apart, for its victims, and these special cells are never very long without occupants.

The screams, the cries, the groans, the ravings, the foamings at the mouth, the struggles, the convulsions, the heart-rending appeals of these wretched beings prevail over all the devices of thickened walls, doubled doors and padded cells. The attacks come so regularly and vary so little that their duration and course is foreseen and calculated. The treatment is almost stereotyped. A given time is allowed for the development, and a given time for the completion of the attack, and a given time also for the recovery from its effects. That is to say, such recovery as is possible, or rather such minimum degree of recovery as is necessary before the patient, shattered in mind and body, and trembling in every limb, creeps from his cell in the infirmary, a living wreck, blear-eyed and blanched, to resume his place among the ordinary prisoners. But it may be that before or so soon as this result is attained the prisoner's sentence has expired. In that case the greater part of the hard labour he has undergone has been the hard labour (and very hard it is) which his own evil habits have inflicted on his own miserable constitution.

My readers must remember that it is not the men who have been many months in prison who trouble the doctor with these fits of delirium tremens. They seem to come not immediately as the direct result of excessive drinking, but more remotely and as a result of the sudden deprivation of drink which is consequent upon imprisonment. Just as it is stated that people who are in the habit of taking arsenic and other poisons in small doses can do so with impunity, and can even increase the amount consumed so long as they continue the practice, but are liable to

suffer its pernicious effects when they abandon the degrading habit, so it is also with alcohol. A man who is soaked in drink, who never gets it out of his system, may go on for years with apparent impunity, never quite drunk and never truly sober, yet the moment that the tap is stopped outraged nature rebels, and in a fit of delirium tremens the man succumbs to the venom—the virus which he has harboured in his system. In this connection it is instructive to note the conversation which is current among the nurses and that curious class of habitual prisoners who, from the regularity of their stay in hospital, might well be denominated "the habitual invalids."

"You've got two noisy ones to-day," one of the "habituals" would remark to a nurse. "Yes, and they are both very bad." "Anything serious?" "Oh no. They will be through in a couple of days," and all the time this conversation is proceeding the wretched creatures to whom it relates will be filling the air with their cries and curses.

The inspection of the delirium tremens patient by the doctor is one of the most serious and responsible of his duties. He knows the whole business so thoroughly that it is not necessary for him even to enter the cell. Accompanied by the principal warder or by one of the nurses, he stands at the cell door and faces the maniac before him. Even in the access of his fury the sufferer will often instinctively quail before the assured air, the resolute attitude, the searching eye, the authoritative demeanour of the all-experienced doctor. No word passes, but in the few moments the doctor stands there, he has noticed every salient feature in the case, and can foresee every development. Nothing is said in the patient's hearing as to restraints or remedies, but when the door is shut again and the doctor and the principal warder or

nurse are alone, the former will convey in a few short words the directions which when carried out will bring rest to the excited nerves and slumber to the troubled brain.

As delirium tremens is the most striking and most common of the really serious maladies dealt with in the prison infirmary, so the "freaks" are the most remarkable among the patients. By the "freak" is understood a man who is a freak of nature, who has some abnormal physical peculiarity, some excess or deficiency of physical attributes. I never knew till I was in Pentonville hospital that "freaks" were so common. Of course, they are exceptional or they would not be "freaks," but they are exceptions which are expected and provided for. Men who are born without their due share of fingers, or an excessive number of toes; men deficient from their birth in a limb; the deformed; the eccentric in body—these are the "freaks."

From the number of "freaks" I met at Pentonville, the conclusion has been forced upon me that there is a connection, a subtle, but indisputable connection between physical eccentricity and moral obliquity. There are generally two or three "freaks" in the hospital at the same time, for the "freak" is constitutionally feeble. When speaking of "freaks" I must not forget the mental, moral, and intellectual "freak," the men certainly not insane, nor absolutely weak-minded, but of perverse mental, moral, and intellectual gifts; the men with a mental twist. No doubt many of these cases are assumed. Just as some man in ordinary life is perversely eccentric—eccentric of malice aforethought—so many prisoners think it pays them to be odd.

There is surely no nation in the world more tolerant of oddity than the English, provided that the oddity has a political or religious bias. In those cases one might go so

far as to say it is esteemed and encouraged among us, and therefore, of course, it loses its spontaneity and is cultivated. There is, I verily believe, quite as much oddity deliberately assumed as there is oddity that is involuntary and spontaneous. Perhaps of all oddity, religious oddity is the most common. We reserve a special esteem and respect for the man who cannot agree in religion with any of his fellow-creatures or any religious denomination, the man who insists that he is right, and that all the rest of the world is wrong.

One afternoon in the exercise yard at Pentonville I came across a curious instance of this kind of character. There was a talkative, noisy lad there, who was giving the prison officers a good deal of trouble. He was not so much actively disorderly as shifty. He kept the officers always in doubt as to what he was going to do next. It was February, and we had had some weeks of dull, sunless weather, that "cold, grey weather" which, according to Charles Kingsley, "makes hard Englishmen." Everybody was impatiently longing for a gleam of sunshine. Under the influence of a sudden breeze, the clouds parted, and the dreary atmosphere around us was brightened by the full force of a February sun. The youth in question was exercising with some other habitual prisoners, one of a large ring.

Directly the sun appeared he stopped, stepped on one side, let the man behind him pass on, beat his breast, looked up to heaven, and then, as if overwhelmed by ecstasy, fell down upon his knees. With outstretched arms and upraised voice he then commenced a long, ranting, rambling invocation of the god of light—of the sun. For a moment the human ring of which the sun-worshipper formed a part was broken and interrupted. The officer in charge was equal to the emergency. He

shouted to the men who were not sun-worshippers to take no heed of the interruption, and so they continued their rounds, little edified, I fear, by the unwonted spectacle. The fellow was evidently not a lunatic; there was method in his madness, and I hope I am not uncharitable in saying that I suspect he was not sincere. His at the best was a mental "freak," and he wanted to pose as the devotee of a strange religion. He continued on his knees, apostrophizing the sun, until the exercise was over, when he somewhat tamely obeyed the officer, got up, and followed the rest of his party into the cell, where, I understood, he resumed his devotions.

At Portland I had been much interested in the work of the chaplain's department. In addition to the services in the prison chapel, I had noticed as closely as I could the relations between the chaplain and his immediate subordinates—the Scripture-reader and the school-masters on the one hand, and the prisoners on the other. I knew that the House of Commons voted a large sum annually for this branch of the prison service, and I was anxious to see how the system worked, especially from the point of view of the State, whether, in fact, the State got due value for the large sum of money thus liberally voted. As a politician, I was also desirous of observing the attitude of these State functionaries towards the Roman Catholic and other religious denominations outside the Established Church. There was another interesting question personal to the chaplain and his staff, and yet most vital as affecting the value of the work they undertook. How far were these men themselves interested in their duties? Did they themselves believe—did they practise what they taught? Or were they mere hirelings—day labourers—performing, like other day labourers, the minimum of work for the maximum of pay? Or were they impressed

with the higher aspects of their calling, setting, in their own lives, an example of the value of the lessons that they taught, and seeking in their daily work to serve a higher Master than the State? Were they, in a word, mere State functionaries, or were they zealous evangelists and missionaries?

These were very interesting questions which were never wholly absent from my mind, and I have much to say about them. The result of my careful observations, begun at Wormwood Scrubbs and continued through the ten and a half years of my prison life, has certainly been to weaken many preconceived opinions, to suggest many doubts and difficulties, to reveal many anomalies and abuses, and to strengthen my own personal preference for all that is simple, unpretentious, and tolerant in creed and worship. It will probably be more convenient if I devote a separate chapter later on to these very interesting matters, but I am happy to take the opportunity of mentioning here that it was at Pentonville that I first became acquainted with the Church Army and with the mission work that they are undertaking in connection with our prisons—a work which is altogether distinct from, and supplementary to, the work of the chaplain and his assistants—a kind of evangelistic "extra."

## CHAPTER X

### PENTONVILLE (*continued*)

I ATTENDED the services in connection with an eight-day mission conducted by a Church Army "captain." It was, if I am not mistaken, the first mission ever held at Pentonville; at all events, they were the first services of the kind that I ever took part in, and they interested me greatly.

Let me say at once that the spirit in which they were conducted was excellent, and their tone admirable. So far as the preaching is concerned, it was direct, earnest, unsectarian, practical, and obviously sincere. Perhaps the missioner was a little new to his work, perhaps he was somewhat hampered by his unusual surroundings, and hence failed, as I thought, to drive home as effectively as he might have done the great lessons that he taught; but my opinion may have been unconsciously influenced by the expectations which I had formed, and I have really nothing but praise for a very faithful and sustained evangelistic effort. Afterwards at Parkhurst I assisted at many such missions, and had sometimes a good deal of pleasant and profitable conversation with the missonaries, one of whom in particular, Captain Hanson, is a man of great natural gifts and enthusiasm, a most effective and powerful preacher, a capable musician, and a very wise, willing, and sympathetic counsellor. I have nothing but

praise for these missions. I am sure they do a great deal of good, and I should very much like to see them made more frequent. There is no reason that I can see why they should be confined to the Church Army, and why the Salvation Army should not be afforded similar opportunities. I believe it would prove a great success. Where the Church Army and its methods are made welcome, there the Salvation Army and its methods should be welcomed too. There is plenty of work for both.

At Pentonville I was particularly struck by the manifestly disinterested enthusiasm and zeal of the senior chaplain, who took part in the mission services with much heartiness. I was also greatly entertained by the dissimilarity of the theological views of the chaplain and his assistant. Both were doubtless thoroughly earnest and sincere men, and as ministers of the same Church were presumably at one in essentials. But they differed even in their garb, and yet both were pronouncedly clerical in their attire, showing a strong contrast in that respect to the majority of the prison chaplains, who go about in very unclerical pilot jackets and bowlers.

The senior chaplain at Pentonville was never visible without his trencher-cap and gown; the assistant chaplain went about in a very long cassock. The chaplain was an old-fashioned High Churchman, sensible and tolerant, who regarded dissent as an aberration, an eccentricity to be pitied and deplored. The assistant looked upon it as a sin to be proscribed and denounced. The chaplain expounded with great force and earnestness the moral precepts of Christianity; the assistant chaplain delighted in its dogmas, and never failed to dilate on the confessional, the Apostolic Succession, and the infallible voice of the Church—subjects which were no doubt of special interest and advantage to the great majority of his con-

gregation. The chaplain was, I believe, on the committee of the S.P.C.K., and recommended to me its publications. The assistant chaplain initiated me into the works of certain flamboyant American ritualists, who hailed from Philadelphia—whole-hoggers, if ever men were, carrying their republican liberty to the verge of licence. In fact, so far as I could make out, they rejected all living human authority; they ignored their bishops and their synods on the one hand and the Pope on the other. They taught the Roman doctrines, but they carefully repudiated the Roman discipline. They were able writers, and the nature of their teaching may be gathered from the admission, the somewhat reluctant admission, that the people who differed from them, pious Dissenters in particular, might just possibly be saved; they might just get to heaven at last. They would not be punished for their invincible ignorance.

I have been asked what is the special feature, the predominant characteristic of the internal economy of Pentonville. Does it differ from the other prisons which I have known, and in what respect? To all of which I answer unhesitatingly that it does differ, and that the main difference is in its dirt.

Do not let me be misunderstood. I cast no reflection on prison authorities or officials. I am quite sure that they do all that men can do to cope with and overcome this horror. I go further and say that I sincerely sympathize with them in having to work under such distressing conditions, and amid such unpleasant surroundings. There is no blame attaching to them. The truth is, the evil is inherent to, is inevitable in a place like Pentonville. I do not want to shock the reader's sensibilities; I do not like to appear coarse; but, to put it plainly, the place, when I knew it, swarmed—literally

swarmed—with vermin. I had not been many days at Pentonville before I realized the full significance of the assurance given me by the kindly principal warder on my arrival there, that the cell assigned to me was "clean." He mentioned this, as I thought at the time, as its distinctive feature—and so it was—its distinctive and exceptional feature. What I saw during my long stay in the hospital opened my eyes to the difficulties of the situation, and, while it made me uncomfortably conscious of my undesirable surroundings, left me tolerant, or rather I should say long-suffering, in my appreciation of the conditions which prevailed there.

To understand them my readers must bear in mind that a large proportion of the inmates of Pentonville belong to the "street arab" class of the population, and that they are as filthy in their personal habits as they are lawless and debauched in their lives. Every time that any one of these London pariahs enters the prison he brings with him, on his body, in his hair, and on his clothes, quite a devastating horde of abominable parasites. He is literally laden with them—pests so abundant, so tenacious of life, so congenial to the place and its patrons that a proportion, relatively no doubt an infinitesimal number, survive. They survive, indeed, in spite of every preventive which has been devised for their destruction. The bath at Pentonville is, I am told, a real, a very real, bath, a thorough ablution. Before any prisoner enters it he parts with all his clothes, or rather his rags and tatters, and when he emerges from the bath he is supplied with comparatively clean and tidy prison clothing. At that moment he is probably cleaner and better dressed than at any other time in his life. The rags meanwhile are gathered into a heap, are carefully separated (or shall I say isolated), and submitted to the most severe and

searching process of disinfection that modern science has yet contrived.

All that care, all that science, all that watchfulness can suggest is done, but it is all in vain, the exuberant vitality of the hardy London flea and other loathsome parasites triumphs over the vigilance and ingenuity of man.

I had myself a distressing experience of the degree to which these pests are in evidence. One day when I was still very ill I was greatly cheered by a kindly visit from the chaplain. He seated himself at the end of my bed, and talked to me on many topics. Great was my pleasure, till suddenly I discerned a large, nay, a gigantic, parasite disporting himself along the furrows of his reverence's waistcoat—it was evidently some adventurous creature which had attached itself to the good man in the course of his round of visits. It so alarmed and so fascinated me that I found it impossible to continue properly the conversation—all my attention was concentrated on that monster. Happily the chaplain misinterpreted my silence; he benignly remarked that I was tired, and with a kindly word of encouragement he hurried away. Under happier circumstances I should have tried my best to detain him. As it was, his departure was a matter of supreme relief. How glad I was to see him depart, "bearing his spoils with him"!

I am not familiar with the processes adopted for abating this nuisance in the prison. In the infirmary the principal warder and the nurses scrutinize every cell daily, and there is hardly a day when such a scrutiny does not lead to the fumigation and disinfecting of one or more of the cells.

Pentonville at the time I am writing of was very badly circumstanced as regards its library. The books were old, in bad condition, and mostly very elementary in character.

The school-master considerately gave me a call to inquire what kind of books I liked, but when I mentioned the books I had been in the habit of reading at Portland, he frankly admitted with a sigh that there were very few of that kind at Pentonville. Indeed, he seemed to take a curious kind of pleasure, to feel a mournful satisfaction, in the inferiority and insufficiency of his library. He repeated more than once in a tone of acquiescent regret, "We have a very bad library—a very bad library indeed." It certainly was poor, and there was, I presume, nobody to worry the Home Office (that is the well-understood process for securing a proper supply of books); but poor as the library was, it was not so bad as the school-master thought it.

I have every cause to speak well of prison school-masters. After my one rough experience at Wormwood Scrubbs, my relations with them were as pleasant as I could have wished, but I am compelled to own that with the exception of the Scripture-reader at Parkhurst, who himself is an attractive writer, English literature was not one of their strong points. They were mighty at figures, and could solve most difficult and ridiculous arithmetical problems: the time, say, it would take for a cannon-ball progressing at a given rate or velocity to pass through the earth and come out somewhere on the other side, after allowing for the favourable and unfavourable influence of gravity and other forces. That was the kind of solemn trifling they indulged in, but they knew nothing or next to nothing about English literature. I thought that most people knew of the poet Prior, at least by name, but I remember a remark of one and not the worst-informed of the school-masters. "Prior?" he exclaimed. "Prior? Who was he? How do you spell his name?"

As I have already explained, I arrived at Pentonville in

the early part of November 1897. Christmas Day in that year I spent in bed in the infirmary. On January 2, 1898, I had so far recovered as to be able to resume outdoor exercise, and in the latter part of the month I was able to face my long-deferred examination at the Bankruptcy Court. The doctor consented with some reluctance to my attendance, and, unknown to myself, wrote to the Registrar advising him that I was in a precarious state of health, only just recovering from a serious illness. I was taken down to the court in a cab, and although I was in this admittedly bad state of health, and though I was escorted by two armed warders, I was handcuffed again. It is impossible to conceive of a more senseless or cruel proceeding. It was, moreover, a very trying prelude to a still more trying ordeal. I went through it as best I could.

I was treated with all humanity by the court. The handcuffs had been removed in the waiting-room. If they were needed at all, they were as much needed in the court as in the cab. I was alone with the warders in the cab, and the wanton indignity would, therefore, not attract attention or excite disgust. In the court the eyes of the public and the reporters would be upon me, and so, of course, they were removed. An offer was courteously made to me to postpone the examination, but I preferred to go on. I was invited to be seated. The tone of the Official Receiver's final report to the creditors, which was placed in my hands just before the examination, differed very noticeably from the tone which he or his predecessor had previously indulged in, and the tone of his examination now corresponded to this change. It was searching, but not unduly so, and my replies only tended to confirm what the Receiver's private inquiries had ascertained. In fact, I probably learned from the examination more than the Receiver learnt from me.

I heard for the first time that the deeds of a certain small property were missing. Did I know anything about them? I suggested several places where they might be found. They had all been searched, I was told, and searched in vain. I could say no more. I succeeded in clearing up some other points and in extracting an admission from the Receiver that he made no suggestion of fraud in connection with my bankruptcy. I was quite satisfied with the result. I had submitted myself to public examination, had invited attack, and none had been made. I retired to the waiting-room, took leave of Mr. O'Connor, was again handcuffed, and returned to Pentonville. As I was driven back in the cab I said to the principal warder who escorted me, "How did I get on? I was feeling very ill." "Oh, first-rate," he said. "The only thing against you was about them deeds. Everybody will think you've planted them somewhere."

This was a new light to me. It distressed me so much that I had a sleepless night. I turned the matter over, and as a result of my cogitations I obtained permission from the Governor to write to the Official Receiver. Before this I had become acquainted with the frequency and impunity of perjury in bankruptcy proceedings, a speciality which I find that Macaulay noted so long ago as 1831. I therefore made light of the oaths which had been sworn and the assurances given as to the searches made for the missing deeds. I told the Receiver as plainly and distinctly as I could where the deeds ought to be, where I believed they were, notwithstanding official assurances and searches, and where they would be found, and how they could be found.

My information was adequate, the deeds were found, and the property they related to was realized. For this, or some other service of the kind, I received the almost

unprecedented honour of being thanked in writing by the Receiver, a rare honour indeed, for the Bankruptcy Department is not distinguished for the courtesy of its correspondence, but I never heard that any steps were taken to let it be known publicly that the missing deeds had been found and that I had never had them. The matter is all forgotten now, but unwarranted suggestions of this nature tend to foster prejudice and to keep alive suspicion. If publicly made they should be publicly withdrawn.

I lingered on in the infirmary at Pentonville for three weary months after my examination, so as to give the Official Receiver an opportunity of asking me any further questions and of clearing away any further mares'-nests. I watched from the infirmary windows in comparative ease and absolute leisure the slow advance of an English spring as seen in London through the bars of a prison. Gradually the days lengthened, the nights shortened, the London sparrows began to twitter, the London trees to bud, the London grass to grow.

Through all these changes patients still came and went —one or two to their last home. Whenever this occurred a mysterious and solemn calm seemed to fall upon the infirmary. Doctors and nurses and patients appeared to yield unconsciously to the weird influence of death. They spoke with subdued voices, they moved almost stealthily about. Silently, secretly, the poor worn-out body, the rejected casket which had held the jewel of life, would be removed to the mortuary, and with it the attendant gloom would pass away from the place. In a few short days the form, the very name of the dead man would be forgotten.

I had thought that I should die myself at Pentonville, and that such a fate would be mine.

I paid a second visit to the Bankruptcy Court in the

month of April 1898. So far as the actual journey to and from the court was concerned, it was marked by precisely the same formalities as the first—the two officers (the principal warder and assistant warder) as escort, the cab, the handcuffs. Here I read over and signed the notes of my evidence, and in lengthy interviews at intervals during the day I gave the Official Receiver and his subordinates a good deal of information. I was much amused, and not a little astonished, at the levity, to use no stronger word, with which the various officials treated many of the claims —the so-called proofs—which had been lodged against my estate. I had regarded them all as serious, for were they not all supported by the solemn oaths of the claimants? But the quasi-judicial functionaries of the Board of Trade knew better. The oath to their minds was evidently nothing but a mere form, and a claim did not acquire the least additional strength in their eyes through being thus solemnly attested. As that is so, I would ask incidentally, is it worth while, is it decent, to retain a method of procedure which thus belittles, which thus befouls, the most sacred and solemn of all legal forms?

Perjury even in a county court is a crime exposing a man to penal servitude. Perjury in a bankruptcy court is apparently nothing but a recognized incident of the game, involving no consequences whatever.

It is pleasant to me to think that my estate presented one satisfactory and exceptional feature, which honourably distinguished it, and greatly facilitated its liquidation. It was not encumbered by a swarm of private and domestic debts, the result of thriftless or improvident living. The unfortunate retail tradesman who usually figures so prominently in these cases—the butcher, baker, grocer, and the like—had no claims against me. Amidst all the preoccupations of my business and political life I had kept

my house in order. The overwhelming proportion of claims arose directly out of the liquidation of the various companies, and most of such few others as remained were indirectly, but distinctly, assignable to the same or similar causes.

It was on the occasion of this second visit to the Bankruptcy Court that I took leave of my counsel, Mr. John O'Connor. For three long years he had been occupied unremittingly with the defence of my interests. From the terrible day in May 1895, when I landed in England, until that moment in April 1898, he had fought my battles in many courts with the same whole-hearted consistency, courage, and zeal as have honourably distinguished his political career. He was far more than an effective advocate. He had been my personal friend for many years beforehand, and he was my friend still. During the weary course of all these proceedings he had heard everything that the highest legal ingenuity, the keenest financial ability could lay to my charge; everything that the bitterest personal animosity, that treachery and jealousy and ingratitude could raise up against me. All the facts, all the circumstances were familiar to him, he had waded through a flood of books, reports, and minutes; he had followed up every track, unravelled every thread. The whole distressing business in all its ramifications was known to him as it was known to no one else, known to him better than it was known even to me, for he knew both sides, while I knew only one.

And now, at the moment when his professional relations towards me were concluded, when for the present there was nothing more to be done than to wait, he was performing unconsciously the most valuable, the most valued, of his many services—I felt with unfeigned joy that as a result of all he had learned, all that he knew, I had not

lost his confidence and friendship, that these were not only unimpaired, but were actually increased and strengthened by what he had learnt. This was to be my consolation and support, my encouragement to persevere, through the years of suffering and sorrow which still lay before me. Sustained by this reflection, which he strengthened and renewed by the many friendly visits he subsequently paid to me at Parkhurst, I nerved myself to bear with patience the hostility of the uninformed or the half-informed. I could wait, through loneliness, suspense, and neglect, for the day which came last April, when I received, on recovering my liberty, a generally sympathetic welcome that was almost undisturbed by a discordant note. In this welcome I found a reflection of the attitude towards me that Mr. O'Connor had consistently and chivalrously maintained throughout, and which he had done so much to inspire in others.

There was nothing now that I knew of to retard my return to Portland. I was conscious that the doctors were watching me rather closely, and I was once or twice surprised by being subjected to tests of which I did not then, and do not now, understand the object. One in particular puzzled me greatly. I was desired to walk along a particular and rather narrow but well-defined plank which ran the whole length of the infirmary corridor. It did not seem a difficult task for a sober man, nor was it; not even when the walk was accelerated into something approaching a run. Anyhow, I apparently satisfied the doctor, and a day or two afterwards I learned that I was to be removed, not to Portland, but to Parkhurst. The intimation was made by the Governor. There was a pleasing absence of the senseless and silly secrecy which had been so disconcerting to me at Parkhurst and Portland. At Pentonville at least I was

treated as a human being, as a man, and not as a mere chattel.

I presume the change of prison from Portland to Parkhurst was due to my illness at Pentonville. I was certainly recovering, but was still very far from strong. Had I returned to Portland it is not unlikely that I should have been hurried away to Parkhurst within a few days, and it was therefore best to send me there direct. I was very pleased at the change.

At length, Thursday, April 27, arrived. I took a friendly leave of the Pentonville authorities and officials. The chaplain came to wish me well; the librarian warder regretted my departure. He was losing, so he said, his best customer. The chief warder and others made an opportunity of bidding me good-bye. All this was consistent with my experience of the place from the day I entered it. A kindly spirit pervaded it, a creditable readiness, a genuine desire, to recognize and reciprocate good feeling. I was sincerely sorry to go. About half-past ten in the morning I was taken from the infirmary to the prison. A substantial, if somewhat prematurely early, meal was provided me, and the Governor came to see me before leaving. I expressed to him my gratitude for all the kindness which had been shown me. He replied that his work would be much easier if all prisoners gave him as little trouble as I had done, and he added, courteously, that my conduct had been excellent throughout. I might, he said, be classified as "a well-conducted prisoner."

Thus my stay at Pentonville came, in spite of all my sickness there, to a pleasant close. Grim as the place is, I shall always associate it with the humanity and patience which I found there. Again, and for the last time in my prison life, I was handcuffed; again I was consigned to the care of a principal and an assistant warder; again I drove

in a cab across London—my last drive of the kind as a prisoner. The newspaper placards told me that war between Spain and the United States was imminent, and I was greatly excited at the news. I had seen many stupendous political conflicts and changes in my time, and now one of the greatest of all was imminent—the disappearance, the extinction of the Spanish Colonial Empire and the assumption by the United States of colonial responsibilities. Two substantial steps in the path of human progress.

## CHAPTER XI

### PARKHURST

LEAVING Waterloo by a train a little before midday, I re-entered the gates of Parkhurst at half-past four o'clock.

It was then, and then only, that I realized how ill I must have been. A group of Parkhurst officials, including the then chief warder and the kindly principal warder who escorted me from Parkhurst to Portland nearly two years before, were standing just inside the gates. As I emerged from the little omnibus they started with surprise. "Why, what's been the matter? What have you been doing to yourself?" said the principal warder. "I never saw a man so run down in my life." I told him that I had been ill, but was getting better. I was feeling very tired and faint. I went to the reception cells. They bade me take it easy. The formalities were hurried over, and thus after an absence of twenty-two months I found myself back again at Parkhurst. In about an hour the assistant medical officer came to see me; he questioned me closely about my condition. He had not seen me before, and as I had nothing the matter with my heart or lungs, apparently the two weak spots with prisoners, he was evidently puzzled about me. I told him that I had been for some months under Dr. Wilson at Pentonville. The name acted as a charm. "Has Dr. Wilson prescribed for you? —did he admit you?—did he keep you in the hospital?"

I assured him that it was so. "Oh, then," he said, "we must look after you carefully. You must come to the infirmary to-morrow, when we will examine you thoroughly. You are evidently very tired now. You can get into bed whenever you like." I availed myself of the permission directly he departed.

The next morning I attended the early morning chapel, and as I was placed on the bench reserved for newcomers, I was, of course, conscious that I was attracting the attention which the presence of every new arrival naturally excites. I looked around and discerned that there were still a few among my fellow-prisoners whom I had met during my former brief stay.

Just before the time for the commencement of the service a quiet, elderly man of about the middle height, dressed very plainly in civilian attire, sauntered into the chapel and seated himself in a kind of pew behind the lectern. I was struck by the calmness and serenity of his face—a calmness and serenity which, strange to say, were not out of harmony with an unmistakable air of authority. I looked for the chaplain; he was not present, and it was evident that he was not expected. The elderly gentleman rose, advanced to the lectern, and gave out a hymn. He remained standing at the lectern while the hymn was sung, and so soon as the congregation had resumed their seats he began to speak. I was very much interested, and listened attentively, perhaps I ought to say critically.

I had at that time a very great and unreasonable antipathy to all kinds of amateur or lay preaching. It was the kind of prejudice a man acquires almost unconsciously. Still, this was a novelty. The speaker was evidently a gentleman, and a man of education, and, without being in the least pretentious, was manifestly quite at his ease. His subject was the healing of Naaman, the leper,

by the prophet Elisha. In a few seconds he had captured my attention. He had evidently something to say which was worth hearing. I ceased to be critical and listened intently. So did all the congregation. Their stillness testified to the power of the speaker, and to the hold he had got over them. There was scarcely a movement or a sound. Such silence, such attention, in such a place, and from such men, was, indeed, impressive. His voice was perfectly level. He indulged in no gestures. There was an utter absence of either rant or cant. It was not preaching. It was something better. It was the kindly, sagacious, acute, sympathetic, engrossing talk of a single-hearted, earnest man who believed every word he spoke. When it ended every one arose as from an absorbing personal and confidential interview. I have listened to the best preachers of my time, as well as to the best speakers in Parliament and at the Bar, but I never heard anything more effective in their way than the simple addresses which were delivered once or twice a week by the unassuming gentleman whom I have just described.

It was Lieutenant-Colonel Plummer, the then Governor of Parkhurst—the most apostolic man I ever met in my life.

I have had a considerable experience of prison governors, and, with the exception of one whom I met at Portland, all my experience has been favourable. Of course, they have differed in personal disposition and in the discipline which they have enforced. Of course, they have had their fads and their foibles. But, with the above exception, they have been competent, and not unkindly men. But Colonel Plummer stands out distinct from and above them all. I do not suggest that he was perfect, or that he was exempt from the weaknesses of humanity; but it can be

truly said of him, as Goldsmith said of the good parson in "The Deserted Village," that

> "E'en his failings leaned to virtue's side."

It was my fate—my fate and yet my privilege—to be under Colonel Plummer at Parkhurst for some years, and no small measure of the satisfaction which I feel in narrating these experiences arises from the fact that I am thus enabled legitimately in the course of this narrative to offer this tribute to his excellence and to tell the world something about the work which he undertook.

In the course of the same morning Colonel Plummer visited me in my cell. I did not then know that he was the Governor; he came in quite unostentatiously, without any of the "pride, pomp and circumstance" which many governors affect, and which obsequious lick-spittles among the officials delight to proffer. Nothing can be more offensive than their abject attitude. He asked me a few kindly questions as to my prison experiences and state of health, how long I had done, and how long I had to do. When I told him the latter his face changed. He shook his head mournfully, and bade me be of good heart. I fancied he thought that I should not go through with it, and in very truth I thought the same myself. After he had left me I asked the principal warder in charge of the cells who was the gentleman who had just visited me. "Oh," he replied, "that was the Governor. Didn't you know him?" "The Governor?" I said. "Oh no, I mean the gentleman who delivered an address in the chapel this morning. I thought it was the Scripture-reader, or some missionary." "No," answered the principal warder. "It was the Governor, sure enough, and kind as he is, you take my advice, don't you come before him in any other

way than you have just done. For all his goodness, he knows a thing or two."

It was most excellent advice, and I tried to act up to it. I was not quite successful, for I had twice to defend myself from trifling complaints which were made against me—the only two complaints that I ever had to deal with. I was successful on each occasion, but I found that with all his kindness he was a very painstaking judge, who resolutely set himself to get at the truth, and who spared no pains in doing so. I was very much distressed at being involved in these paltry disputes, but I don't regret them now. Painfully as I felt them at the time, the experience which I thus gained enables me to bear witness to the care and conscientiousness with which this good man carried out the most irksome of all his many irksome duties.

I have not exhausted all that I have to say about Colonel Plummer, but now that my narrative has reached Parkhurst, I shall have many further opportunities of speaking of him. No description of Parkhurst, as I knew it, would be complete which did not bring out prominently, so as to do justice to it, the work he did there. It was the single-hearted work of a truly good man, a high-minded Christian gentleman, faithful alike to the State which employed him and to the God whom he served. I will only add now that one or two of the worst criminals in England were reformed by him, and that these men thus rescued are themselves, at this day, working with conspicuous success to raise others from the depths of sin and degradation from which they themselves have been lifted. It is needless to add that Colonel Plummer was revered by every prisoner who retained a spark of good feeling in his disposition, and who had any yearning for a better life.

I don't know, but I doubt if the Colonel was held in

such high estimation at the Home Office. His ways were not their ways. He was far too earnest and practical and self-denying, too careless of forms, too intent upon realities, to find favour with the official mind. How could Whitehall understand, much less approve, a governor who actually thought more of souls than of standing orders?

> "Unskilful he to fawn or seek for power,
> By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour,
> Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
> More bent to raise the wretched than to rise."

Shortly after the Governor's visit I was summoned to the infirmary, where the promised "thorough overhaul" took place. As a result, I was detained for some ten days in the hospital, ten restful and not unhappy days. I have always been susceptible to the influences of climate and weather. Even now my spirits rise and fall with the barometer, and I suspect that part of the cheerfulness which followed my arrival at Parkhurst was due to the difference between its surroundings and atmosphere and those of Pentonville. I am told that the air of the Isle of Wight is relaxing. It may be so. But, relaxing or not, it has always seemed to me to be as sweet and pure as is to be found in England, and if surpassed at all, surpassed only by the exhilarating breezes which quicken and gladden life upon the Surrey and Berkshire Downs, and upon the slopes of the Chilterns.

During my stay at Pentonville I had grown accustomed to the never-ending roar and hum of London, the shouts of its streets, the noise of its traffic. I had had my full share, too, of the mist and the fogs, the smoke and the dulness, which are never wholly absent from the great city. For nearly three weeks we never saw the sun. Now I had exchanged all these for the song of the blackbird, the

thrush, and the nightingale. "The voice of the turtle was heard in the land." The cuckoo was pertinacious in his cries, the air was full of the life, the movement, the sound, the fragrance of an English spring. A man would be a very ungrateful, or very unobservant, curmudgeon whose spirits would not rise under such a change.

It was my lot to stop at Parkhurst continuously for over eight years, by far the longest period of my life that I have ever remained in one and the same place. And it was at Parkhurst, where I became at last quite an old inhabitant, that I grew convinced of the utter failure of our penal system as a deterrent. I saw some of the prisoners come and depart, and return, and then depart, and come again. I here acquired my familiarity with the details, the actualities of prison life. I got to know the ways, in a sense I became a part, of the place, and as my nature adapted itself to the conditions of the life around me, I grew keenly observant of the men I met.

I laid down for myself strict rules of conduct, which I fortunately had sufficient strength of mind to adhere to. I never allowed myself to be idle. I worked diligently at self-imposed mental tasks. I read books which in my days of freedom I had shirked as being dull and uninteresting, but which I now grew to appreciate and love. I took up special forms of study, and stuck to them. I made but one familiar friend, and he was a good one. I never invited the confidence of a prisoner. I never talked about my own affairs, or my own circumstances. On the other hand, I never refused a confidence which was pressed upon me if I thought that I might be of some help or comfort to a fellow-prisoner. And, finally, as much as was possible, I tried to live peaceably with all men, warders and prisoners alike. This is much more difficult than it sounds, for prison life—I am speaking now of

prisoners—is very trying to the temper. I never believed that men could be so quarrelsome, and this was especially noticeable among the educated men.

I am afraid that all this sounds egotistical, but now that I am free I often catch myself wondering how I ever managed to live through these eight years, always rising and, still worse, always going to bed at the same hour—doing the same work, eating the same food, mixing with the same men, moving amid the same surroundings, subject to the same restrictions. It was the life of a machine, not of a man. It was one great merit of Colonel Plummer's evangelical work, indeed it is one great merit of all genuine work of the kind, that it appeals to the individual man—not to men in the aggregate, but to the man in particular—it drives him in upon himself, it bids him rise by personal effort, by faith and self-sacrifice and penitence—and in doing this it preserves, restores, revives his individual capacity for good. It shows him something that no membership of any organization can do for him, a path which he must tread by himself for himself.

During the ten days that I spent in the hospital I met a prisoner who has proved himself to be a remarkable example of the "habitual invalid" type—a type which I am bound to add I regard with a good deal of doubt and suspicion. Of suspicion as to the *bona fides* of the incapacity to work, of doubt as to the justice or wisdom of keeping a prisoner for ten, fifteen, or twenty years in a state of absolute idleness and (in comparison with other and industrious prisoners) in a state of relative comfort. It is a misuse of language to talk of a man as undergoing a term of penal servitude who is thus indulged. If a man is really so ill, so feeble as to be unable to endure the privations, the restrictions, and labour of penal servitude, he is as much out of place in a convict prison as any

raving lunatic would be when ordered to be detained during his Majesty's pleasure.

I have stated that twice in my 3780 days I was reported, although I got through Wormwood Scrubbs, Portland and Pentonville without a report at all. These may seem trivialities to men engaged in ordinary daily life, but they are horrible realities to the prisoner, affecting and colouring his thoughts for many a day. I was reported twice, and on neither occasion, thank goodness, convicted—for I was able on both occasions to satisfy the Governor, Colonel Plummer, as to my conduct in the matters complained of.

It was on Sunday, January 1, 1899, that I committed the heinous offence of wishing a prisoner a "Happy New Year." There was at Parkhurst at that time a young man of good social position and exceptional abilities. He had distinguished himself at Oxford, having been, I believe, a member of Christ Church. He had received a savage sentence of three years' penal servitude from a metropolitan judge, whose sentences were at one time much under review. The sentence was so outrageous in its character that the prisoner was released after he had completed only, I think, twelve months' imprisonment. On the Sunday morning in question, when the prisoners on my landing "fell in" for exercise, the youngster greeted me with a kindly nod and a "Happy New Year!" Of course, I responded. I had by that time ceased to expect the usual amenities of life at these festive seasons, and I confess that I was both touched and gratified. I had not the least idea that in reciprocating his good wishes I was exposing myself to the risk of punishment, but so it turned out.

An officer standing opposite me—for I committed my offence quite openly—shouted very angrily to me—so angrily and so offensively that I at once concluded that

for some reason or other he wanted to provoke me to a display of temper or breach of discipline. Of course he did not succeed, and I thought the matter had dropped. Great, therefore, was my surprise when I heard next morning that I was reported and was going to be "run in." The conduct of the officer seemed to me inexplicable. I had never given him any ground of offence, and I could not understand what all the trouble was about. It was afterwards explained to me, and the explanation showed how true it is that a prisoner, however well conducted, is in the hands of the officer under whom he is placed, that the officer was angry not with me, but with the prisoner to whom I had spoken. They had had some difference of opinion, which had been referred to the Governor, and the officer had come off second-best. He had vowed to make the prisoner suffer, and was waiting for the opportunity to report him. This had now presented itself, but in order to run him in he had to run me in too.

I was therefore hurried off to the medical officer to see whether I was physically capable of bearing punishment. I had gone through five years without the loss of a single mark, and it certainly seemed a very inauspicious beginning of the new year. The doctor was as pleasant towards me as if I was going to give him a guinea on leaving. He felt my pulse, asked me one or two questions, then inquired suavely, with a smile, what I was run in for? I replied, "For wishing a man a happy New Year." He gave a kind of knowing laugh, and said, "That is all right," and dismissed me. I presume he communicated the result of his investigations to the Governor. I went from the doctor to the Governor's office, which was then a curiously composite room, a combination of a place of business and a petty sessional court.

The warder made his complaint against me very fairly.

As before stated, I was not the man he was really "going for," the "inside story" of the case (as the Americans say) being, as I have just remarked, that the prisoner to whom I had spoken had once reported the worthy official himself, and that he was thus trying to get "a little of his own back" again. The Governor asked me if the charge was true, and I said, "Certainly; I merely wished a fellow-prisoner a happy New Year, and I could not believe that this was a serious breach of prison rules." He said, "Oh no; it is not a serious offence at all. As a man of intelligence, you must make allowance for the warders. They are often very much harassed in carrying out their duties. Men like you should try and make their work easy. It is all right; you can go." I said, "Thank you, sir," and hurried off as quickly as I could, as glad, indeed, to get back to my cell as if it were my home, and as if I had scored some great personal success. I will not refer to the second complaint until I have further advanced in my story. It was a more deliberate attempt to do me harm by a warder (the only one) whose ill-will I had quite unwittingly aroused. Of that ill-will I never knew the cause, but I had to guard against its effects until the very end of my imprisonment.

The reader must not suppose from this experience of mine of being "run in" for wishing a man a "Happy New Year" that communications between prisoners, the simple and social expressions of good feeling, are rare, or very difficult. During the first days that I was in "28 Party" I received, as I had at Portland, many acts of kindness and sympathy. I can remember to this day, in fact, I never shall forget an incident, trivial in itself, which I never recall now without laughing. Among the members of "28 Party" at that time was a young man, some four or five and twenty years of age, who might have sat for

the picture of Mr. Punch. In height, in nose, in hump, in chest, the resemblance was exact. Moreover, from indigestion, perhaps, the nose was one of the most brilliant —not to say flaming—that I ever beheld. When I first saw this little man I started with amazement. It is needless to add that the poor little fellow shared the same mental characteristics as most men who are afflicted bodily. His vanity and self-conceit were inordinate. "28 Party" at that time worked just inside or at the door of their cells. They were all located at the top landing of "A Hall," a delightfully breezy and remote situation, "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife"—too high up, at the top of too many stairs, to be frequently visited by inquisitive principal warders.

As I was a newcomer, this punchinello was extremely anxious to make me acquainted with his many merits and excellencies, and at last he found his opportunity. I was passing his cell door, when the officer happened to be engaged at the other end of the landing. He started up from his stool and said, "Oh, Mr. Balfour, I am very glad to make your acquaintance. I saw you at Wormwood Scrubbs, but I never had the opportunity of speaking to you there. My name is ——, I write poetry, and am an excellent musician. I play the violin and the guitar. I am here for shooting at the young lady to whom I was engaged. I sing alto in the choir, and get up to G in the *Venite*."

This important information was run off with a fluency that amazed and disconcerted me. I could not tell what to say. I stammered out something about hoping he hadn't killed the young lady.

"Oh no, I only wounded her, and they gave me five years for it. Hard, isn't it?" Fortunately, the return of the warder relieved me from the necessity of reply.

This man's talkativeness was by no means remarkable. I knew very well indeed a "boy burglar," a conceited, silly-headed, half-educated youth, the son of respectable parents. He was not an "old lag," but a "star," and the four years' penal servitude which he suffered have, I hope and believe, cured him of his folly. For a time he was seated next to me in the "star" tailoring party. He was a great gossip, and remarkably proficient in the curious kind of noiseless, surreptitious talk which is peculiar to prisons, and which is not by any means the least of the many evils for which the foolish and cruel "silent system" is responsible. I thus heard most of his story. It was not my practice, as I have stated, to invite such confidences. It would have been a one-sided proceeding, for, as I never talked about myself, I had nothing to give in return. But, on the other hand, if a man talked to me of his own accord I listened sympathetically and with interest. It was in this way that I heard all about the boy burglar's career. There was nothing romantic about it. I felt more pity for the boy's parents than interest in his adventures.

It was the depressing tale of a conceited youth who thought it a fine thing to be at war with society, who, enjoying the shelter of a decent, happy home, crept out at night when all the family were in bed, let himself down from a window (if I remember rightly), and, in company with another lad as harebrained and as silly as himself, broke into various houses in the neighbourhood. I believe the pair displayed some ingenuity and dexterity and enjoyed some temporary success. Their great difficulty was to dispose of their spoil. They were captured at last in a public-house they had broken into, when the other lad was so mad as to threaten a policeman with a revolver. I can imagine few domestic troubles more trying than that

of the unfortunate parents of these wretched boys, whose first knowledge of their sons' misconduct reached them in the shape of an intimation that the boys were locked up, having been caught red-handed in the committal of a burglary.

My companion sought to conciliate my good opinion by assuring me that he never robbed the poor. Oh no. He robbed for the poor; he always gave them a substantial share of his gains. He had evidently read Pierce Egan's *Robin Hood* and accepted that legendary hero's curious code of morality. I was derided as a curious and perverse reasoner when I ventured to plead that even a rich man's house ought not to be broken into nor his property stolen. With surprise he told me that he "couldn't see it."

I met at Parkhurst with a special class of cases which if not peculiar to that great establishment are certainly seen more frequently there than in other convict prisons. I refer to elderly and infirm convicts who are quite past work of any kind, and who from their age and infirmities will remain a burden to the State when they are discharged from prison. They present a curious and a serious social problem. I remember a prisoner in the infirmary at Parkhurst who greatly interested me when I was librarian orderly, and who is a fair example of the type. I regret to say the man I am referring to was an "old lag," having three letters on his arm—that is to say, he had undergone three separate sentences of penal servitude. The letters were J. O. B., and the man was familiarly referred to as Job. I never knew, for I never inquired, what was the kind of crime he affected. He must have been close on seventy years of age, perhaps older. I believe he had spent nearly the whole—certainly the greater part—of the term of his last sentence in bed. The time for his release arrived, but the man was so utterly broken down, so

absolutely helpless and unfit to travel, that his removal was out of the question.

Week after week passed. Autumn subsided into winter, winter developed into spring, and he was still lying in bed, giving very little trouble and perfectly placid. He was an Irish Protestant, fond of reading, particularly books on Irish subjects; a man of very fair intelligence and tolerable education. He had often seen and heard Daniel O'Connell. He had taken "the pledge" from Father Mathew. I went out of my way once or twice to procure for him congenial books—a history of Ireland, which greatly delighted him, and Carleton's admirable *Traits and Characteristics of the Irish Peasantry*. This seemed to win his confidence. His face used to brighten up when he saw me come, with my tray of books, into the ward where he was lying, and I seldom left it without exchanging a few words with him. I had hoped from his manner and bearing that he would have relatives who would be able to maintain him.

"Come, come," I said to him one day about the beginning of last February, "the days are lengthening. You ought to be getting up, so as to be able to go home."

He gave me a strange little smile, and said, "Oh, thank you. My time's been up now for some weeks, but the doctor won't let me go, for he says I'm too weak to bear a journey."

"But that's just the reason you should try and get about," I said.

"Oh," he answered, "I'm in no great hurry. I'm well enough off here. I am very kindly treated, and only hope I shall get on as well in the home I am going to."

"I hope so too," I said. I thought he was perhaps anticipating his death. "Where are you going to?" I ventured to add.

"Oh," he replied, "my family are in Liverpool. But they are poor people, and I mustn't be a burden to them. Besides, there are a lot of young children, and I should be in the way. Grandfathers generally are. So soon as I am well enough, I'm going where I have a right to go—straight from here to the workhouse at Preston, where I suppose I shall end my days."

The poor old man seemed quite reconciled to this dreadfully appropriate ending, this mournful last act of an ill-spent life. It will be seen that the only doubt that troubled him was whether the workhouse infirmary would be as comfortable—as peaceful a haven—as the prison infirmary. And I confess I shared that doubt. So that here we see that it was recognized all round by the authorities at Parkhurst, the authorities at Preston and by the man himself, that he was to be for the rest of his days a burden upon and a charge to the public. I have heard that he has since left Parkhurst, and if he be living still I have little doubt he is regretting the change.

It will be observed that this is not a case where the prisoner was a malingerer or disorderly. The man was well conducted, so far as that expression can apply to an habitual criminal. Penal servitude had simply been too much for him, and when penal servitude had taken out of him what little vitality he possessed, it could only fling his useless body into a workhouse for the remainder of his natural life! This does not free the nation of its burden; it only passes it on. No one will contend that this can possibly be the proper ending of the matter. It is at best a mere evasion, not a solution, of a very difficult problem.

Of course there are other cases, not nearly so many as there ought to be, where penal servitude proves a valuable discipline, a real blessing. When I went to Parkhurst

and joined "28 Party" there, the orderly of the party, the foreman or Jack-of-all-trades, who assisted the warder in charge of the party in, or who rather relieved him of, most of his administrative duties, was a certain C——, one of the smartest and most industrious men I ever met. He was a "lifer," and it may be useful to remark that "lifers" are not as a rule nearly so interesting or so picturesque as the burglars or the forgers, or some other classes of prisoners. For one reason, because they are not as a class habitual offenders. A single crime, often quite unpremeditated, often the result of a momentary impulse, has brought them to their horrible position.

This was an exception to that rule. C. was by sheer force of character a very interesting prisoner indeed. A native of Lancashire, he had worked nearly all his life in a large chemical works. His crime was the murder or manslaughter of his wife. If he had really intended to kill or injure her, his offence was of an exceptionally brutal character; but he consistently insisted that he had had no such intention, and that the affair was accidental. I drafted two or three petitions for him, and thus learnt his version of the terrible story. He was released shortly after he had completed fifteen years' penal servitude; so it may, I suppose, be assumed that the Home Office had some misgivings as to the gravity of his crime.

He was a most industrious prisoner and a remarkably skilful workman. In fact, he was hard-working and industrious by nature, and the same industry which he displayed in prison he had shown when a free man. Rough, impatient, truculent, outspoken, straightforward, honest, he thought nothing, when free, of working for two or three consecutive days and nights at a stretch. Of course he earned high wages, and the money thus hardly earned was largely squandered in drink. He was totally uneducated, and

consequently had no other resource. His life in freedom, therefore, alternated between two kinds of excesses, excess of labour and excess of liquor. He had two children, whom he brought up respectably. His wife, unhappily, shared his drinking habits, and participated in his drinking bouts. Of course, they quarrelled; such a result was inevitable under such conditions.

One night, when both were partially in liquor, the ill-fated woman called her husband a most opprobrious name. He leapt up to strike her, and she in turn, realizing his intention, fled from the house. He pursued her along the narrow, ill-paved and badly-lit court in which their cottage was situated. He gained upon her, she fell, and the next instant he fell across her with such violence as to cause her death. He always declared, as I have said, that the shock was accidental. The theory of the prosecution, on the other hand, was that he had kicked her to death. He was tried before a judge who has long since left the Bench, and is, I believe, dead, who was notorious—whose name was a by-word—for the ferocity of his sentences. The prisoner had the misfortune and the folly to get into a personal altercation with the judge. The legal luminary was accompanied by his wife, who was seated near him on the Bench, and who, as I was told, so far forgot herself as to take advantage of her position to comment audibly upon some of the evidence.

C. most foolishly resented this interference, and there was what the newspapers call a "scene in court." It was to the prisoner's credit that both his children, many of whose letters I have read, accepted their father's version of the cause of their mother's death, and promoted petitions on his behalf. So did his numerous relatives. I say numerous advisedly, for I remember his telling me with much pride that his family was renowned throughout

all Lancashire for its exceptionally patriarchal size, he being one of the (I think) twenty-two living sons and daughters of the same parents.

This was the man, condemned for such an offence, whom I found working away as orderly in "28 Party," who had access to all the dangerous tools, knives, scissors, marling-spikes, hammers, etc., which were used by the party. Of course, he got no drink at Parkhurst, and, therefore, was able to do himself justice, and to show what an industrious worker he really was. He had profited by the educational facilities of the place to learn to read and write fairly well, and his reading and writing thus learnt were solely devoted to acquiring a thorough knowledge of the various kinds of work which "28 Party" then undertook, and which then included mattress-making, gromet-making, sack-making, ship-fender making, shoe-making, net-making, needleworking, and tailoring.

He would not only work at all these varied branches of industry, but he could instruct, and did instruct the other members of the party, although a standing order lays it down as a strict rule that no prisoner is ever to be employed in the instruction of other prisoners. That particular standing order, like many others, is violated every working day in the week, and every hour of every working day. It would really seem that the main use of the standing orders is to afford chapter and verse for the punishment of any prison officer or prisoner who may be obnoxious to those immediately over him. When no such use exists, the standing orders may be considered as in abeyance. They are never heard of when their enforcement would be inconvenient or give trouble.

In addition to thus acting as orderly for his party, this indefatigable worker was also orderly of his landing, and

barber and haircutter besides. He did, in fact, the work of a couple of officers and of half-a-dozen men, and never had a leisure moment through the working day. I don't think that he was very popular with the majority of his fellow-prisoners. Enthusiastic workers are not likely to be regarded with much favour in prison by men who for the most part are seriously and successfully bent on doing as little as they can. As a prisoner once remarked to me, "C.'s all very well, but I don't take much notice of what he says. He's all for work, but I'm all for play." If he was not very popular with the majority of his fellow-prisoners he was positively hated by the little lot of malingerers, idlers, and mischief-makers who are to be found in every prison party. They laid endless traps to catch him, to get him into trouble, to "give him away," and, failing this, one tall, good-looking Irishman, Pat by name, a very hot-tempered ex-Dragoon, decided that C. should be taken down a peg or two, and that he, Pat, was the boy to do it. He would give C. a hiding, if he "went to chokee for it." But he reckoned without his book, for much as C. excelled as a worker, he was quite as proficient with his fists.

When, one Saturday afternoon, in his capacity as orderly of the landing he was distributing soap at the cell doors, Pat, on his door being opened, caught C. a tremendous crack across the ear. The soap in C.'s hands went flying in all directions, and in the twinkling of an eye Pat, who was almost twice as big as C., went flying too. A couple of well-aimed blows—left and right—lifted him off his feet and hurled him back upon the floor of his cell. C. darted after him, but restraining himself smiled grimly at his prostrate antagonist, gathered up the scattered soap, and resumed his work with a quiet and self-satisfied air. The whole affair was so sudden, so

dramatic, that those of us who were privileged to witness it stood spellbound with astonishment and admiration.

The officer who was going round with C. must have shared these feelings, for, if I remember rightly, he did not report the affair. This was very wise, for C. did not deserve punishment, and Pat, who did deserve it, had certainly received it. C., as I have just said, was one of the few prisoners whom I have known who really benefited by a long term of imprisonment. He was always, as I have said, a good worker, but until he went to prison he was miserably ignorant and a slave to drink. When he regained his freedom he returned to the world as good a workman as ever, but infinitely better informed—able to read and write, and free from the bondage of a degrading habit. C. must have repaid by his work the expenses of his maintenance in prison three or four times over, and if, since he has resumed a life of freedom, he has kept sober (as I hope he has) the country at large is the gainer by his return to the ranks of labour.

The want of elasticity and appreciation is one of the greatest blemishes of the prison system, and C.'s case is an instance of it. Save for the consideration he received from the officers—a consideration prompted alike by gratitude and self-interest—he was no better treated, earned no more marks, and received no more favours, than the least industrious prisoner within the prison walls, no more than any self-indulgent idler who was clever enough to keep himself free from reports. C. worked because he had a positive love of work, but as to any benefit which accrued to him, whether of treatment in the prison or of remission of sentence, there is no ground to think that he experienced any advantage.

This explains why prison labour is so unproductive—the inducement to labour is so slight. In fact, there is none.

To use an expression which is now in general use, the "atmosphere" of a convict prison is not favourable to energy. A minimum standard of industry, of good conduct, is set up—a standard so low that it is within the reach without difficulty of everybody. Only the wilfully wicked can miss it. "Do as little as you can, get as much as you can." That is the advice that is heard on all sides; that is the one policy which is pursued. Now, if the minimum were kept where it is, but special inducements were offered for increased labour, and greater facilities were provided for doing more than the minimum, a very different state of things would soon be brought about. The output of production would be increased three or four fold to the profit of the State, and to the contentment and amelioration of the industrious and deserving. I submit that the total ignoring of special industry and merit under the existing system is a positive harm to all prisoners, whereas its adequate recognition would be an unmixed blessing.

I repeat, therefore, that this want of elasticity, both as regards classification and conduct, is the integral defect of the system. Provided a man avoids losing marks, he may sink to the lowest depths of degradation; he may contract the vilest personal habits; he may be surly, disobliging, selfish, idle, morose, and yet rank as a well-conducted prisoner, and be held to have earned precisely the same remission of sentence as the best and most industrious of prisoners—as the man C., for instance, whose case I have been referring to. There is no intelligent appreciation or appraisement of character or conduct. There is no attempt at it. Everything is managed by a coarse and undiscriminating rule of thumb.

The task of appraising and appreciating special work would, I own, be a difficult one, involving watchfulness,

thought, responsibility and trouble, whereas the action of the rule of thumb is perfectly easy—quite automatic, in fact. The official mind will always find a thousand arguments against taking trouble.

I am afraid that my reminiscences of the prisoners I have met will include few men so useful and worthy as poor C. The secrecy which enshrouds prisoners during the term of their imprisonment is doubtless accountable for the many inquiries which I receive as to my acquaintance with particular prisoners whom it is assumed I have known. How great that secrecy is, and how much the supervision and control of letters and interviews diminishes their value in public opinion, is shown by the fact that I have been continually asked for information of this character from even the near relatives and close friends of prisoners. Only lately I was sounded as to my impression of the conduct and condition of a young man, a "lifer," whom I knew at Parkhurst, the inquiry coming from the lad's own father. A mother living at Southsea has begged for like information touching an only son. Indeed, there is scarcely a week when some such inquiry does not reach me.

I am not therefore gratifying mere idle curiosity or pandering to sensationalism when I describe the bearing and seek to bring out the character of many of the men whom I have known. Of course, I shall not mention names, nor shall anything I say tend to injure any prisoner (however bad his crime may have been) who is seeking by his conduct to atone for his offence against society. Nor would I for one moment hurt the feelings or intrude upon or aggravate the sorrows of afflicted friends. These are sacred in my eyes. But we shall only adequately judge the prison system if we realize the way in which it affects particular individuals. The system fails, the long sentences

inflicted are altogether in vain, if the culprit is returned to society unabashed and unrepentant. The only way by which repentance can be truly manifested is by conduct.

Let us take one case. Let us call the prisoner, for convenience sake, "Z. 400." He is a young, sharp-featured, self-conscious, merry-faced boy, looking four or five years younger than his actual age. He is five or six and twenty; he looks about nineteen. He is a tremendous gossip, and has a store of well-turned phrases which would seem to imply that he must at some time of his short life have moved amongst decent folk. He is undergoing a term of six years' penal servitude. He has lost by misconduct every hour of remission. He presents, in fact, the most bewildering of problems. He appears to have no tendencies which are not evil, and to be absolutely immune from every agency or influence for good, and yet there is something about the boy which makes him, in spite of all his wickedness, almost a favourite with those who come in contact with him.

Regular work he has never attempted, and no one was ever so foolish as to expect it of him. But if there was any kind of odd or irregular work to be done, he would do it very well indeed, so long, at all events, as the novelty of the occupation lasted. If he is thwarted in anything, he at once resorts to some act of impish devilry. He tears up his clothes, breaks up his cell fittings, or smashes his cell windows; and here comes in the absurdity of the whole business: this superfluity of naughtiness, this defiance of all authority, this contempt for all rule have been much to his advantage. It pays him. It is true he has lost all his remission marks; but that is really no loss to him, for he is better off in prison than he ever has been or could be in freedom. He never for one moment conceals

his intention of coming back again to Parkhurst as soon as ever he can.

He has been an occasion of despair to the higher authorities. He has some opportune disease of the hip which suffices to place him on the sick list, though a sturdier, stronger little blackguard never breathed. Being on the sick list, he is practically out of the Governor's hands, except when his conduct is more than usually outrageous. He has been the terror of the medical officer. Sometimes he was ranked as weak-minded, sometimes treated as strong-minded, whereas he is neither one nor the other: he is evil-minded—the very incarnation of wickedness, the pest of the prison.

I had a good deal to do with this boy in connection with the library. Needless to say that in his dealings with the librarians he was characteristically and consistently troublesome. One day I had the opportunity of remonstrating with him, and I thought I had done so with effect. I said to him that it was a pity that a young man of his excellent qualities should make himself so disliked, that he really gained nothing by his folly, and that, though it might seem to him a fine thing to set the law at defiance, the law would be too strong for him in the long run. He quite assented to all this. He received my remarks like so many pious opinions from which it would be discourteous to dissent. The next time that he got into trouble I resumed the attack as kindly and as urgently as I could. I really thought that my importunity appealed to him.

He looked at me intently, and after a pause said, "It's no good, Mr. Balfour; it's no good. You'd better talk to somebody else. It's no good trying it on with me. You see, I'm a bad boy, a very bad boy indeed;" and I never got any further with him. I would not despair, and we

still remained on a fairly amiable footing. He would give me a friendly nod and a smile. He would take the library book which I handed to him. He would thank me for it. He would not throw it at my head or on the floor, but so soon as the librarian had departed, he would ask to see the principal warder. The book did not suit him. He would not have it. "Why not?" "Oh, it was too old, or too religious, or too clever, or too silly, or he had read it before."

"Well, why didn't you say so to the librarians when they gave you the book?"

"Oh, because I didn't remember it. I've found it out now, and once for all I shan't take the book. If you leave it with me, I'll tear it up."

This threat was always sufficient, and the warder or principal warder would come to the librarian and implore him, for the sake of peace and quietness, to humour this spoilt child. In such matters it was he, and not the prison officials, who was the master, and truth compels me to add that it was much the same with the doctor. While other hard-working prisoners were well-nigh famished, this young gentleman, who only worked when he pleased, and who pleased very seldom, was bribed into good behaviour by the dietary favours conceded to him. Of course, the boy has been absolutely ruined, body and soul, by such an experience, or rather, every evil disposition in him has been exaggerated. He came to prison full of vice and crime and self-will, and he remained not only full but overflowing with those evil qualities.

Few cases, I believe, attracted more attention at the time than the shooting of a judge in open court by an elderly man of most respectable antecedents. As the crime was committed while I was in prison I cannot speak of it with any degree of certainty. The offender was

sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude, and he is now undergoing that terrible sentence at Parkhurst. I knew him well, and was brought into frequent contact with him in connection with my duties in the library. I should be the last man to seek to belittle the gravity of his offence, or to suggest that it should not receive a punishment of exceptional severity. We are bound to protect those whose duty it is to administer the law. But, knowing as I do the character and disposition of the prisoner, I would make a very earnest appeal for a reconsideration at the proper time of his sentence. Of all the men I have ever met, J—— was the least likely, in my judgment, to find himself as a prisoner within the four walls of a gaol. An eccentric, erratic, gushing, voluble, exuberant old man, full of kindly sentiment, innocent in mind and speech and instincts—if ever there was a fish out of water in this world, it is this man in Parkhurst Prison.

I can only account for his offence by the hypothesis that he was labouring at the time he committed it under overpowering mental excitement—overpowering, in fact, to such a degree as to render him irresponsible for his actions. I am not using the language of exaggeration when I declare that I firmly believe that he would not harm a worm; and that in his case the justifiable and natural horror which every one must feel at his crime is obliterated by the unfeigned astonishment which all who knew him must feel that he should have been the offender. I very much doubt whether this poor old man, who, in striking contrast to the wretched boy to whom I have just alluded, is engaged in a most useful and laborious occupation, ever falls asleep at night, ever wakes in the morning free from tears. His shame, his remorse, his sense of degradation have completely crushed his spirits and broken his heart. The punishment he has already received has

produced all the effect short of killing him outright that punishment can create. It is extremely unlikely that he will live to complete the full term of his sentence, and it would be surely an act of wise humanity to restore him for the last few years that he can spend on earth to the society and the care and the protection of a sorrowing wife and of devoted children.

He is naturally one of the simplest and most gullible of men, and though he has now been many years in prison he is not yet free from the amazement and astonishment which his surroundings are so well calculated to beget. He is for ever brooding over the circumstances of his trial and the humiliation of his early prison days. There was a pathos, and withal a humour in his experiences in Stafford Gaol, to which place he was deported after his sentence at Manchester. The poor old man was so bewildered by what he had gone through at his trial that it was quite impossible for him to fall into the ways of prison life. He thought that everybody was talking about his crime and sentence, and that everybody knew him. And he was eager to button-hole all the officials he met, from the Governor downwards, and to pour into their astonished ears all the explanations and excuses and assurances of which his troubled and agonized brain was full.

Judge, therefore, of his astonishment, when his cell door was opened on the first morning after his arrival at Stafford, at hearing the warder exclaim with pleased surprise, "Why, here's old John come back again!"

"I humbly beg your pardon, sir, but my name isn't John; it's William."

"That'll do, John," rejoined the warder. "You and I have been together too often for me to mistake you. Look here, sir," continued the warder, turning to a

principal, "here's a pretty go—here's old John come back, and he's trying to gammon me that his name's William."

"My dear sir, I assure you my name is William, and I never was in Stafford before in my life."

The principal warder sauntered up, looked keenly at the prisoner, and, turning to his subordinates, said, "You're mistaken this time. I own it's like old John, but it isn't him. Worse luck. Old John was a useful man to have on the landing. Lock this chap up again quickly. He's no good. He's a new hand."

The prisoner whom I have just described is a very fair type or representative of another small but remarkable class of convicts who I think are also almost peculiar to Parkhurst—men who undoubtedly have committed some offence against the law, and yet who, in character, disposition, and habits, cannot possibly be considered as of criminal tendencies and inclinations; men towards whom the dominant attitude of the onlooker is not one of reprobation or reproach, but of wonder and amazement. This attitude is by no means confined to the onlooker, but is also frequently that of the prisoner himself.

"What has J—— done to get here? How on earth did he manage it?" is the question which the onlooker is ever asking, and I firmly believe that it is the question which most frequently occurs to poor J——.

The men who compose this class are elderly men, who have been bankers, brokers, lawyers, merchants, and the like, and they bring with them to prison the habits and foibles common to their walk in life. The most frequent of their offences is breach of trust or some infraction of the bankruptcy laws. I really believe that many of these men may be said to have blundered into crime. Some of them are indescribably silly and stupid, and many are certainly as conceited as they are stupid. Some are as

tenacious in prison of their self-respect and dignity as they doubtless were in freedom, and they must have been as difficult to live with in freedom as they are difficult to get on with in prison. Others adopt a wheedling and deprecatory tone, a tone which is very successful with vulgar and bullying officers. Other prisoners of this class are the victims of some momentary temptation, some sudden and unpremeditated departure from the path of rectitude. In all these cases a short term of penal servitude—three years or five years—would be as effective as the most lengthy of sentences.

Penal servitude as a preventive accomplishes in three years its full purpose with such men. And from the point of view of the State, as they are never anything else but a charge on the community during the whole of their imprisonment, the shorter the sentence the more advantageous it would be.

## CHAPTER XII

### PARKHURST (*continued*)

IT would be difficult to find a greater contrast to the inoffensive old gentlemen whom I referred to in the last chapter than a man with whom I was brought in frequent contact during the latter part of my stay at Parkhurst. He was an ill-shaped negro giant, of herculean proportions and fearfully forbidding aspect, of naturally hideous features, contorted and accentuated by vice and self-indulgence, a protruding jaw, long, ape-like arms and legs, and cruel, sunken, bloodshot eyes that gleamed with the same angry, hungry light that is always noticeable in beasts of prey.

His voice and gestures were in harmony with his appearance; he did not speak, he growled; and whether walking, sitting, or standing, his legs floundered and sprawled, his arms tossed and twirled in countless contortions, which were more suggestive of a ghoul than of a man.

This creature—to use a neutral term—committed, I believe, a savage and unprovoked assault upon a pair of unfortunate lovers. I do not pretend to fathom the motive of his crime—I have heard the very darkest of motives attributed to him—but of this I know nothing. It is sufficient to repeat that the crime was both murderous and unprovoked, and that it brought upon him a well-deserved sentence of ten years' penal servitude.

From the time of his arrival at Parkhurst until the happy day when I last set eyes upon him (may I never see him again!) his demeanour displayed a truculent and aggressive brutality, such as I have never beheld in any other prisoner. For a brief period he attended, I believe, the prison school, but the prison school-masters, in addition to their many other excellent qualities, are wise in their generation. Never did a backward scholar complete his education so rapidly. He was then placed in one of the indoor parties, with no harder task than some description of sewing. Here he lounged upon his stool at the end of a long line of elderly invalids, turning over in a listless fashion the canvas or flannel upon which he was supposed to work. Of course, he was incorrigibly idle, justifying all that has ever been said (and often said most unjustly) about the innate laziness of the negro race. On one occasion he threw down his work and refused snarlingly to pick it up again, until he was cowed into obedience by the stern and resolute action of the warder.

He filled up his time by indulging in unearthly ejaculations, in brutal gibes, and in offensive comments on all that went on around him. Such phenomenal vagaries were at first a source of boundless amusement and delight to the case-hardened criminals among whom he found himself. But even they grew tired and disgusted. At first his antics diverted them, then they were provoked, and then they—even they—shrank from him with unconcealed disgust. I never passed by him in attendance on the librarian warder or one of the school-masters without his craning his long neck and shouting, regardless of all rules and discipline, some offensive order or complaint.

"Give me other books! I can read!" "I will have other books!" "I will have picture-books!" "I will have the best of the books! I will have the best of

everything!" "Don't yer hear me? Here, stop, I tell you!" are fair specimens of his habitual style of address.

Once or twice he twisted and turned so violently on his stool that it suddenly tilted up beneath him, and losing his balance, he rolled upon the floor, where for a moment he lay and grinned, revealing two rows of teeth so white and gleaming as to startle the onlookers by their contrast with his dusky cheeks.

Fortunately for his companions, he did not stop long in one party. Like many other specially evil-disposed prisoners, he "enjoyed" bad health, and drifted periodically from the hall to the hospital, and from the hospital to the hall. To look at this hulking negro the uninitiated would assume that he had nothing else the matter with him but unmitigated wickedness. This, however, would be an injustice to the medical staff. He was so diseased that when he changed his cell it had to be shut up and fumigated and disinfected before it could be made habitable for any other prisoner. This loathsome fact alone will show that I am not giving way to exaggeration in my account of this man. It is not pleasant to mention such a subject, but the narrative of my experiences at Parkhurst would lack fidelity if I neglected to portray this twentieth-century Caliban, from whom I now turn with unalloyed relief.

This man was doubtless sent to Parkhurst because of his horrible state of health, but in many cases I confess that there has seemed to me to be something extremely haphazard—not to say happy-go-lucky—in the location, the primary sorting-out of prisoners, and their assignment to particular prisons. If from reasons of health or physical incapacity it is necessary that two men who have been confederates or accomplices in crime should both be sent to the same prison—a step which, in my opinion, should

never be taken except under most extraordinary circumstances—the utmost care and vigilance should always be exercised at the prison that the men should be kept absolutely apart.

I have known one or two curious instances of the neglect of this most obvious precaution. A prisoner whom I knew well had the misfortune, when the charge against him was under investigation, to entrust his interests to a roguish attorney, who misappropriated the funds which had been provided for his client's defence. The attorney was prosecuted and sentenced to five years' penal servitude. He came to Parkhurst, whither the quondam client whom he had so cruelly swindled was also sent. It is not to be wondered at that the relations between the two men were, to say the least of it, strained. I was a witness one day of a most amusing encounter between them.

The client was employed at tailoring in his cell. The attorney was engaged in the appropriate and characteristic work of whitewashing. In pursuit of that avocation he was set to whitewash a cell which, unknown to him, happened to be occupied by his victim. No two prisoners are ever allowed to be together in a cell at the same time, unless in the presence or company of an officer—an obviously reasonable precaution. Lawyer and client therefore met at the door, the one making way for the other, and the manner in which the astonished and conscience-stricken attorney dropped his whitewash can and brushes, and fled in terror from the presence of the man whom he had wronged was a sight to witness.

This is an amusing instance, but the effect might have been very far from amusing if either of these men had been of a violent disposition. What might have happened then would have probably resembled what did actually happen in the following case.

A—— and F—— were convicted together of a very daring burglary, and in due course both arrived at Parkhurst to serve their respective sentences of three and five years. There was nothing, I am told, in the nature of their crimes to account for the difference in their sentences. F—— assumed, and probably with good reason, that the judicial favour shown to A—— was the price paid him for treachery, and, thinking this, F—— naturally vowed vengeance. A—— had committed what is the deadliest of crimes, the unpardonable sin, in the eyes of an habitual criminal.

Now, if ever there was a case in the world where two men should have been kept apart, it was this case. No one prison, however large, was large enough to hold them both. But with the fatuous carelessness which is so conspicuous in matters of this kind, and of which I have noticed many instances, these two mortal enemies were actually allowed to work day by day in the same party —a party, moreover, in which highly dangerous tools are used. Of course, what might be expected to happen in such a case did happen. Both men were employed in ships'-fender making, and one afternoon, when the tools were being served out on the resumption of work after dinner, F——, taking advantage of the temporary confusion of the moment, ran furiously at A—— and dealt him several dreadful blows on the head with the large, heavy, ugly, unwieldy hammer which fender-makers have to use. A more perfect weapon of attack at close quarters it would be hard to find. It was nothing but the instantaneous intervention of two active and vigilant officers that saved A——'s life. As it was, his escape was almost miraculous. One wound in particular was within the fraction of an inch of a vital spot. If ever there was a deliberate attempt at murder it was this attempt.

Now, as we are by this time well aware, the one thing which the authorities most dislike is publicity. It is for this reason that cruel assaults and outrages upon officers and prisoners, attempts at arson, and other serious and odious crimes are habitually dealt with summarily and secretly (and, of course, wholly inadequately) as breaches of prison rules, and not as disgraceful infractions of the law. But here a life had been imperilled, and so the offender was relegated, as all such serious offenders should be relegated, to the ordinary course of justice. F—— was duly charged with the crime, was tried at the Winchester Assizes, and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude.

Such was F——'s fiendish rancour against his accomplice and victim that he actually tried to clamber out of the dock and get at A—— in open court! The only regret he was ever heard to express for his crime was that he had failed to murder A——, an omission which he vowed to rectify whenever he got the opportunity—an opportunity which we may trust will never again be put in his way.

I shall have, naturally, a good deal to say about books in prison, of the help they were to me individually, and of their great influence for good upon prisoners in general. Moreover, as I was known to watch very closely the working of the prison libraries, and was very frequently consulted by my fellow-prisoners about books, and was finally employed for nearly seventeen months as "librarian orderly," I have been able to amass a huge stock of reminiscences.

In this part of this work I am trying so far as I can to deal with the details of my own prison life, and to do this thoroughly I do not think I can do better than describe in detail a day of my life at Parkhurst (say a Monday) while acting as librarian orderly.

The first bell rings in the morning at the unearthly hour of 5.10—that is to say, well before sunrise, for more than seven months in the year. The quantity of sleep, or rather bed, inflicted on prisoners is such that most men hear this resounding and protracted summons to enter on the duties of another day with relief and satisfaction. True, it heralds in another sad and melancholy day, but it also reminds the prisoner that he is beginning "a day's march nearer home." Some prisoners, indeed, are always up before the bell rings—such was my practice—they prefer to grope about in the dark to tossing about in the utter weariness of too much bed. There is a good deal to be said of tremendous importance and urgency about the evils, moral and physical, of this phase of prison life, but it can only be hinted at, not said outright. And yet it must not be passed over altogether, for the evils have been allowed to grow and spread through the reluctance of right-minded men to deal with them, and through the impossibility of their adequate discussion in the Press. Every doctor, every school-master, every naval and military officer, every ship's captain, every city missionary and worker in the slums will recognize the gravity of this problem, and will recognize that it ought to be faced.

At half-past five one division of the day officers arrives (the whole body of officers is divided into two divisions, and these divisions take the early morning duty alternately), the cells are opened, the presence and condition of their inmates ascertained, the slops are collected, and at about 5.45 the breakfasts are served. Mine consisted of a pint of warm but rather doubtful tea, a 10 oz. loaf of coarse but well made and well baked brown bread, and 2 oz. (a minute daily ration) of butter or margarine—presumably the latter—which I never ate. Supper had been served the day before by 4.40 at latest, so that it will be observed

that this very frugal fare is all that a hungry man or youth receives to satisfy his natural cravings for food after a thirteen hours' fast. And, be it remembered, I was allowed the full diet, and that the said hungry man or youth would be considered by most of his fellow-prisoners as extremely lucky to get it. He might have to comfort himself (cold comfort) with "D" diet, in which case he would get 2 oz. less bread and no butter or margarine.

These preliminary proceedings of a morning are got over by the officers with surprising celerity, for the time they have for their own breakfast depends upon the speed with which they accomplish this portion of their work; that, at least, is the understood and reasonable arrangement. But whenever a chief warder wishes to play the tyrant, to show his authority, and to "take a rise out of" his subordinates (a very common wish, I fear, among chief warders, of which I could cite many instructive instances), he will direct the gate-keeper not to open the gate nor allow the officers to leave the premises, although their work for the moment may be over, until the actual time specified by the standing orders as the breakfast time for officers shall have actually arrived. Of course, the time meant by the standing orders is the latest time, but the orders can be twisted so as to act vexatiously, and cause inconvenience to an industrious and well-conducted body of men, whose one fault (a grave one!) is that they are not all chief warders. As a matter of fact, it is often so twisted.

At ten minutes to seven the officers return. The interval has been employed by the prisoners (who have, of course, been locked up in their cells) in cleaning the cell utensils, in arranging the cell according to the prescribed regulations, and in dressing. All this can be got through in less than the time allowed—in fact, there is, I should

say, a margin of from ten to twenty minutes, according to the industry and good-will with which these necessary domestic tasks are discharged.

The interregnum is a welcome one to the reading prisoner, and it may be very usefully employed in reading if there should be light enough—a most important "if." Light in prisons is furnished quite as grudgingly as food. It is a point on which the doctors, if they dare speak out, if they expressed in public what they admit in private to prisoners, would have a great deal to say. A convict is given books to read and time to read them, but while you give these with one hand, you withhold with the other the one essential element of light by which these advantages can be enjoyed. Directors and inspectors are apt to vaunt the excellence of the contents and management of the libraries, which do indeed deserve praise, though, of course, there are improvements which might well be made in both. But having got thus far at a considerable expenditure of public money and labour, and having taken to themselves all the credit and praise for such arrangements, they deny to the prisoners for whom all these benefits are intended the means of enjoying them.

Not only are the cells unnecessarily and disgracefully dark in the daytime, but everything is done to reduce and curtail the quantity and quality of the artificial light by night. What is the use of giving men books if you withhold the light to read them by?

At five minutes to seven the bell rings for morning service, which begins in the prison chapel a minute or two after seven. This is got through more or less hurriedly by a quarter-past seven, and then the whole body of working prisoners fall in on parade in the prison yards. For a large number of prisoners the more active duties of the day commence with half-an-hour or forty minutes'

exercise. It is the absolute uniformity, the deadly dulness and monotony of these continually-recurring parades and their attendant wearisome formalities, their searchings, their sorry parodies of military drill, and the like, which constitute a most trying and depressing feature of prison life. I never minded being shut up in my cell, provided I had books to read and light to read them by, nor did I ever grumble at my work, which, indeed, I welcomed as a wholesome and useful factor in my life. But the parades and their harassing trivialities were a real trial, repeated twice a day with no other variation than might result from an outbreak of fractious insubordination or misconduct from some prisoner, driven often to despair and desperation by these constant reminders of his degradation and disgrace.

Whenever any painful incident disturbs the monotony of these proceedings, it is instructive to note the expression on the faces and the look in the eyes, the painfully repressed excitement, of the eager yet absolutely passive onlookers. These tell their own tale, and unmistakably reveal the delighted devilry of the ill-conditioned and evil-minded, the shame and distress of the orderly and well-disposed.

Before the exercise was concluded it was the business of the librarian warder to call for my fellow-librarian orderly and myself, and to escort us to the library, where our day's work began. As I here mention my fellow-librarian orderly for the first time, it will be proper to refer to him more minutely, for much of the work and nearly all the experiences which I here relate were shared, or more than shared, by him. He was a well-known man, whose case has excited a great deal of interest among the public, and has given rise to considerable discussion in the Press. I refer to ex-Police Constable Rolls, who had been convicted

on a charge of perjury, and sentenced to five years' penal servitude.

He had always strenuously asserted his absolute innocence of the crime, and that assertion has been accepted and adopted by a large and earnest and influential body of sympathizers, including many barristers, ministers of religion, and journalists who have carefully scrutinized and weighed the evidence for themselves. I may add that throughout the Metropolitan Police Force the predominant opinion is to the same effect. I mention these circumstances because, in view of them, it is not necessary for me to enlarge on my opinion, which entirely concurs with this conclusion. I prefer to speak of Rolls the man as I found him, as I worked with him, and as I was impressed by his character and conduct as they were unfolded in the daily duties of our very onerous work.

Our work in the library was both harassing and heavy, and called for much zeal, much patience, and much physical strength, and Rolls gave all three with a willingness and resolution which were beyond all praise; with a generosity, too, so far as I was concerned, in the matter of physical strength, which I shall ever wish to acknowledge.

Arrived at the library (I take, as I said, a Monday morning for an example), we librarian orderlies had to load ourselves with the necessary supplies of books for distribution at the cells which it was our duty that morning to visit in company with and under the control of the librarian warder. The books for promiscuous or casual distribution were stacked in two somewhat heavy trays, the "special" books—books specially applied for by prisoners—being fastened up in somewhat unwieldy bundles. The distance from the library to the prison halls —to A Hall, for instance—is some 150 yards, and uphill—a sharp rise—all the way. Each of us would place one of

the above trays, laden with from forty to sixty books, and weighing altogether some 70 lbs. or 80 lbs., on his head, and Rolls (one tray and its contents were quite enough for me, requiring all my strength and both my hands) would also lay hold of an additional bundle or two, and thus laden we would climb or stagger or tumble up the steps and acclivities between the library and A Hall.

But the stiffest climb of all—the last straw which often nearly broke the camel's back—was yet to come, for we then proceeded to scale the steep flights of iron stairs reaching to the topmost landing of that four-storeyed building. So soon as we had gained the top landing, and I had recovered my breath, the distribution of books commenced. The trays were placed on carriages or trolleys especially constructed for the purpose, which could be wheeled along the landings, and so, passing from door to door, the books would all be changed, those given up collected, and others given out in their place.

When the prisoners were not in their cells, but out at work with their parties, the process was comparatively a swift one. The prisoner leaves at his door the book he desires to give up, the librarian warder selects another to be left in its place, or (where a book has been specially applied for and is available) the special book is taken out of its special bundle or tray and handed in, also in exchange, of course, for a book given up. But where the prisoner happens for some cause or another to be in his cell at the time of the librarian's visit, that functionary does not get off by any means so quickly.

The prisoner will be certain to have a good deal to say about his books, and will take care to say it all. Past grievances, past omissions, past mistakes, have all been carefully treasured up, and will all be commented on, and if he is not receiving a special book it will be very difficult

indeed to satisfy him with any book that there may be in the tray. He is probably a man who has not devoted laborious days and nights to literature in the past, yet he is none the less a critic, and, in his way, a good critic too. He has one great qualification for a critic. He thinks he knows what he likes, and he is quite sure about what he dislikes. There is also no room to misunderstand his opinions. They are expressed with a frankness and vigour which would put many modern critics to shame.

He has always one great weapon in reserve; whenever for any reason he wants to avoid a particular book, he falls back upon one unassailable formula, "I have read it before."

"When?"

"Oh, in my last lagging," or, "In my last lagging but one."

The statement is probably false, and is not accepted as a valid reason, unless confirmed by an entry on the prisoner's "library card," which records the registered number of all books issued, and the dates of all such issues. It was always a curious thing to me, as I feel sure it will be to those readers who are fond of really good reading, that the unwillingness ever to read a book a second time under any circumstances was so very general, so very strong, and so obviously sincere. It was considered a perfectly valid objection to any book, however popular and attractive it might be.

It would really appear that men who are unaccustomed to reading, men with whom it is not a habit, are quite oblivious of the delight which attends the second and still more frequent perusal of a really first-rate work. Shades of Shakespeare and of Scott, of Macaulay and of Thackeray! No faithful follower of yours would ever ignore the free and unalloyed delight which attends every fresh reading of your chosen volumes!

Of other objections to books I shall hope to speak hereafter. Here let me only cite one which struck me, I confess, as really well founded. We had in B Hall at Parkhurst a singular youth, who had been sentenced to five years' penal servitude for bigamy. How he was ever convicted at all, and how such a severe sentence happened to be imposed, passes, I confess, my comprehension. There was no attempt at concealment about either marriage—the culprit's remarkable parents had themselves attended both weddings, and on each occasion had, in their own words, "given their son away." If anybody deserved punishment, it was surely either they or the lady who went through the ceremony of a second marriage, for she was perfectly cognizant of the existence of the first wife, and of the fact that the first marriage had never been legally dissolved, though the parties had obtained a decree of judicial separation.

The bridegroom was subject to epileptic fits of extraordinary suddenness and severity, and as he was not good-looking, and curiously ill-educated and ill-informed, and was moreover without either means or habits of industry, it is difficult to understand how he came to be regarded with such favour as a husband. Well, the librarians had had once the misfortune to leave at the cell of this altogether exceptional bigamist a novel with so appropriate, so painfully appropriate a title, that it is not surprising that he asked us to exchange it. A man with his peculiar experience might well object to receive a novel entitled *My Two Wives*. As he himself rather aptly informed me, he had suffered too much through his two wives ever to care to read about them.

This distribution of books completed through the whole of the two top landings, which contain 160 cells, we heaped up our trays with the books which had been

handed back to us in exchange for those we had delivered, and returned with the trays, thus laden, on our heads, to the library. Fortunately, it was all downhill this time. Here we occupied what remained of the time before dinner in going through the books we had brought back, setting those apart which had been applied for, and in replacing the remainder on the shelves for redistribution on some other landing on some other day. All this was scarcely completed before the "Cease Labour" bell sounded at ten past eleven, when the active librarian warder, under whom we worked, hurriedly escorted us back to our cells in B Hall, which we indeed were glad to reach, for we were both hungry and tired.

My dinner that day—remember, it was Monday—consisted of an 8 oz. loaf of the same coarse brown bread already described, of 1 lb. of very inferior potatoes, of a truly Lilliputian ration of 2 oz. of boiled bacon, and of 12 oz. (or it may have been 16 oz.) of haricot beans. Of this curiously constituted repast I can truly say that the bread and the bacon were the only satisfactory (and, to more than half the prisoners, the only edible) elements. During the whole of my prison life I never made any complaint whatever about my food, and I am not going to do so now. I will content myself with remarking that it concerns the State quite as much as the prisoners, that the food for which the State pays the fair market price should be at least of average quality, and that if haricot beans must figure in the menu they should receive the special attention in the matter of thorough and careful cooking which is absolutely essential to make them digestible.

Having therefore recruited exhausted nature on 8 oz. of dry bread and 2 oz. of boiled bacon and an indefinite and indeterminate allowance of potatoes, I rested, locked

up in my cell, until five minutes to one o'clock. It will be observed that my dinner hour was early, but it must be remembered that I had breakfasted somewhat frugally before six o'clock.

How this period after dinner is passed by the prisoners generally I cannot pretend to say. Some, I believe, actually succeed in getting a midday nap, all at some time or other employ themselves in letter-writing, and many, no doubt, read or study. But I will here take the opportunity of making what will, I fear, seem a very commonplace suggestion. It is, however, I assure my readers, of infinitely greater importance than will appear to the uninitiated, for it will, if adopted, do an incalculable amount of good, both physically and morally. By far the most baneful of all the defects in the present system of prison management is the frequent and prolonged confinement of prisoners in their cells. The two most crying wants, both of which can be supplied at little or no cost, are more exercise in the open air and more light in the cells. Kindly nature generously provides light and air in abundance, and nowhere more so than in the beautiful Isle of Wight. They are, indeed, given freely without money and without price, but these free gifts thus lavishly bestowed are neglected, are rejected, by our stupid prison system, just as if they were, in fact, the rarest and the costliest of manufactured commodities.

At one o'clock the wearisome general parade in the prison yard is repeated. The parties proceed to and resume their work, and the book orderlies repeat in the lower landings of A Hall their proceedings of the morning, as already described.

At five o'clock the "Cease Labour" bell is again sounded, and all outdoor work ends for the day. About 5.20 teas or suppers are served out. Mine consisted

of 12 oz. of the same coarse brown bread and a pint of very fat—but most excellent—Navy cocoa, 2 oz. of excellent cheese being added twice a week. After supper the prisoner remains in his cell till the curfew is sounded at five minutes to eight, when all lights are turned out, and he is left absolutely shut off, except in cases of sudden and serious illness, from all communication with his fellow-men until half-past five the next morning.

As bearing on my suggestion of the need of more exercise in the fresh air, and on the remark of a juryman at a recent inquest at Parkhurst as to the severity of close confinement, I would point out, and I do most earnestly implore the reader to remember, that by far the longest portion of every day is spent by every convict who is not the inmate of a ward in the prison hospital, in very rigorous and often very demoralizing "close confinement." Let me supply a table of its daily duration—

| | Hrs. | Min. |
|---|---|---|
| From midnight to 6.55 a.m. . . . | 6 | 55 |
| From 11.20 a.m. to 12.55 p.m. . . | 1 | 35 |
| From 5.15 p.m. to midnight . . . | 6 | 45 |
| | 15 | 15 |

From this has to be deducted, in the case of the orderlies on landings, the time occupied in collecting slops and serving out meals, say at most half-an-hour on two or perhaps three days a week. On the other hand, there has to be added an additional 4 hours and 20 minutes on Saturday afternoons, and 3 hours and 25 minutes on Sundays. This, therefore, makes close confinement for—

| | Hrs. | Min. |
|---|---|---|
| Five days a week . . . . . | 15 | 15 |
| Saturdays . . . . . | 19 | 35 |
| Sundays . . . . . | 18 | 40 |

Of the 48 hours which make up Saturday and Sunday, no less than 38 hours and 15 minutes are spent in close confinement! Surely these figures are a sufficient justification for my plea for more fresh air and more light, and I commend them to the plain-speaking and independent juryman who disapproves of so much "close confinement."

I have thus supplied a detailed account of how a prisoner spends his day in prison. I have been the more anxious to give this account because the prison authorities when challenged on any detail of the prison system delight to fasten on some trivial and perfectly immaterial error, and to lift up their hands in horrified deprecation. This is a familiar and well-worn device of officialdom. The public is first carefully kept in the most absolute ignorance of all that passes within our prisons. Woe to the prison officer, woe to the prisoner, who attempts to reveal the secrets of the prison house! (If certain angry officials had their way, I have no doubt it would also be woe to one released convict too.)

There is one universally prevailing impression about prisons which amounts to nothing less than a popular delusion. It is generally believed that absolute and spotless cleanliness is one of their most distinctive and characteristic features. It may be so in some local prisons, where the work is done indoors, where many of the prisoners are new to the life, are serving very short terms of imprisonment, and are anxious to get free again in the early future. This is one of the advantages of short sentences. We have already seen that vermin abound in Pentonville. In the convict prisons which I have known, where the conditions are altogether different to those that prevail in local prisons, it was not, I confess, the cleanliness but the dirtiness which surprised me. Neither the clothes that the prisoners wear nor the cells they occupy, nor the

halls in which they are housed can by any flight of fancy be regarded as clean. It is dirt that dominates in these establishments. A prisoner is required to scrub out his cell once a week, and he is expected to do it in the early morning after breakfast, and before attending chapel at seven o'clock—that is to say, at a time of day when for over six months in the year his cell is inadequately lit by a single jet of gas placed in one corner of an oblong vault, the light from which is dimmed by the thick and frosted glass that screens it. Further, the small cube of soap which is served out to prisoners fortnightly is just sufficient for a man to wash his face and hands twice a day and for his weekly bath; there is very little or none to spare for scrubbing floor and stool and shelves and table, nor will a cleanly man be inclined to use the bit of soap, which has been thus employed, for his own personal ablutions.

This is just another instance of the practice of "make-believe" which prevails all through the convict service. Cleanliness is "made a point of," it is insisted upon, is preached, and is boasted about; a certain outward appearance of cleanliness is even attained, and then all requirements are deemed to be complied with. The appearance, the show, suffices. The substance is ignored. And as part of this chartered hypocrisy, this mere eye-service, all the appliances for securing and preserving cleanliness are supplied in a manner which is nothing less than niggardly. Soap, cleaning rags, whitening, scrubbing brushes, and all other necessary paraphernalia are served out so grudgingly, so inadequately, as to be incompatible with anything like thoroughness. Sometimes cleaning rags and whitening are not served out at all. "They are out of stock," "The steward won't supply them," are quite frequent and familiar excuses.

There is one hall at Parkhurst which is the worst

feature (structurally) of Parkhurst. Under the active and vigilant control of the present Governor, who is ever on the look-out to effect improvements, it has been touched up and renovated to the utmost extent of its capacity. One particularly dark and noisome purlieu, known by everybody at Parkhurst as C Hall cockpit, has been rendered habitable—a triumph of resourceful energy—but dirt still predominates in all its precincts. You can paint and renovate a building, but you cannot keep it clean when its inmates are dirty, and some of the cells in C Hall, in spite of all that has been done for them, are once again little better than pigstyes. The floor boards are begrimed with mud, the table and shelves are littered with breadcrumbs, the cell utensils are battered and befouled, the quilt, blankets, and towel are black with dirt, the books are overlaid with dust, the very writing slate is so besmeared with successive layers of grease as to be useless; a well-trained dog would shrink from such a kennel.

In saying all this, I am speaking of what I myself have seen. It was my duty (and a most unpleasant duty, too) to visit these cells once or twice a week. Now I feel pretty sure that somehow or other no inspector, and certainly no casual visitor, ever gets a glimpse of these filthy dens. If this description of them should ever come under the notice of the Home Secretary, I can quite understand that he would consider it exaggerated. I admit that I should do so myself if I were in his place, but if he really wants to know the truth let him make a genuine visit of surprise.

If he will allow me to act as his escort, and to indicate the right moment for the visit, I will undertake, if no substantial change in the conditions results from these disclosures, that his eyes will be opened, and that he will

admit that my description falls short of the actual reality.

This is a perfectly disinterested offer on my part, for, as may be well imagined, I have no wish ever again to behold the wretchedness of C Hall.

Talking of escorts reminds me of an amusing experience of my own at Parkhurst some years ago, when a highly-esteemed and efficient principal officer and I reversed for a few minutes our relative positions in a very curious way. He found himself on the wrong side, while I was on the right side, of a cell door. We changed for a few minutes our respective places. Instead of his having me in his custody, I had him practically in mine. Instead of his shutting me up in a cell, it was my part to get him out of one. It occurred on a Sunday morning, about the year 1901, at a time when the great A Hall, with its 320 cells, was all but deserted—the Protestant prisoners were at exercise, the Roman Catholics at Mass. I had been ailing for some days and was told to stop in my cell, as the doctor would be sending for me. About half-past nine my cell door was opened, and Mr. J., a very kindly, sedate, and circumspect principal warder, announced that he had come to escort me to the infirmary.

"Hurry up," said he. "We are short-handed to-day, and I ought to be in half-a-dozen different places at this moment."

I was not quite ready, but I promised I would lose no time.

"I will wait for you at the bottom of the stairs," he said. And I went on with my somewhat meagre toilet. It was soon completed, and I hurried out on to the landing and down the stairs.

Great was my surprise when I reached the ground floor to find no Mr. J. The vast hall was quite deserted. I

stood there for the first time in my imprisonment free from close personal observation and control, all alone. What could have become of the principal warder? Suddenly I heard the most violent uproar in one of the ground-floor cells—shouts and kicks and hammering. For a moment I thought that the disturbance was the work of some refractory convict, but I was puzzled, for I failed to catch any of the revolting blasphemies which invariably accompany such outbreaks. I ran to the cell door, and peered through the spy-hole. There, to my astonishment, was Mr. J. locked up as close and as tight as if he had been the oldest of "lags." He had sauntered into the "store cell," to see, doubtless, if all was right—a puff of wind had slammed the door behind him, and lo! he was caught and caged. Just before I looked, he, a tall man, had clambered on to one of the shelves, and had shouted through the window for deliverance, hoping to attract the notice of the men at exercise: but a noise of that kind is too familiar to secure much attention. He had jumped down from his perch, and was now kicking and hammering with all his might and main at the door.

Directly he was aware of my looking through the spy-hole, he ceased, and exclaimed, in the most insinuating and dulcet of tones, "Oh, Balfour, I have met with an absurd accident. I'm shut in here. Will you just go into the exercise yard and tell the first officer you meet, to come and release me at once?"

I did as I was bid, and I shall never forget the look of blank amazement upon the face of the officer who saw me saunter out of the hall quite unattended, and walk across the yard to speak to him. He started forward as if it was his duty to lay hands on me. I think he fumbled for his truncheon, in case I should at all show myself violent. I

so enjoyed the situation that I fear I slackened my pace and lingered a little.

"Hullo! What's this? What's up now?" he almost screamed.

"I'm sent by Mr. J.," I said, in my calmest tones, "to tell you that he is locked up in the store cell, and that you are to let him out immediately."

The surprise and astonishment expressed on his face were transformed into something like a broad grin. "Well, I'm blowed!" he exclaimed. "Come along with me, and I'll let the old bloke loose."

I need scarcely say that casualties of this kind, when they happen to principal warders, the "grave and reverend signors" of the prison service, are especially diverting and delightful, both to their subordinates and to prisoners. Mr. J. and I often met again, but he never referred to this episode. He was a very good officer, who never did any harm to anybody if he could help it, but was even more remarkable for the care he took to keep out of harm's way himself. Speaking to me once about the books I was distributing at the various cells, he mentioned incidentally that his favourite work was Hervey's *Meditations Among the Tombs*. A most appropriate and congenial book for a man who had spent over thirty years of his life in carrying out the silent system.

Reverting again to my own experiences, I recall a very curious incident which shows how even the principal warders, the stern censors of discipline, may sometimes trip most egregiously themselves. There is a very strict rule, and a very reasonable one, that the cell and hall keys ("shots") are never under any circumstances whatever to pass into the hands of prisoners. This is a rule to which no exception is allowed. I have even heard of a blacksmith warder, a bluff, happy-go-lucky being, a

strange compound of good nature and bad manners, who was actually reported by no less a person than an inspector from the Home Office for allowing one of his men to handle not the keys, but so harmless an article as the padlock of a shed! (How it could be repaired if not handled, I have never been able to divine!)

Well, some time ago, there was a principal officer who was rather apt in moments of pressure to lose his head. It was evening. He was in charge of the hall, and I was working as orderly in the store cell. There was a good deal of bustle in the hall; hair-cutting was going on, and there was more confusion and hurry than were usually observable. Suddenly the worthy principal was called away. For some reason or other he was wanted in a hurry in another part of the prison. The senior warder present, to whom the principal had to hand over the temporary charge and the keys of the hall, was quietly gossiping about his pet hobby, photography, at the other end of the building, forty or fifty yards away.

"Here, Balfour," cried the principal warder, "I want you. Make haste. I'm called away for a minute or two. Take these keys to Mr. O'Dowd, and tell him he's in charge till I come back."

I stared in astonishment. He tossed me the keys, and hurried away. Knowing as I did the rule, I took hold of the keys gingerly, as if they would bite or burn me. Holding them on the tips of my fingers, my hands stretched out well before me, so that I could not be suspected of any malpractices, I made my way to the little circle which O'Dowd was entertaining. "Mr. O'Dowd," I said, "the principal has sent you these," and I rattled the keys vigorously.

O'Dowd looked, started, burst into a kind of jeering laugh, a broad grin lit up his typically Irish face. "Well

I'm d——d!" he exclaimed, "this beats everything!" It was, of course, a dreadful blunder of the principal's, but I do not suppose O'Dowd was sorry to know of it, or that he failed to let Mr. C. know that he knew. It was a useful fact for a man of O'Dowd's proclivities, which were at once tyrannical and treacherous.

I have been asked, "Who among the 'star' prisoners make the best and who the worst prisoners? It would be an interesting fact for those who want to understand the ordinary run of prison life, apart from sensational incidents which are presumably exceptional." It is, doubtless, an interesting subject.

The best prisoners are, without doubt, the lawyers. There is less humbug, less hypocrisy, less self-deception, less self-assertion among them than among any other class. They indulge in fewer complaints, and, what is even better, in fewer fables. Themselves men of trained intellect, accustomed to work out and solve intricate problems, they do not delude themselves or seek to bamboozle others. They have violated the law, and they know it; and they are sensible enough to regard their punishment as an integral element, a natural consequence, of their crime. They appear, as a whole, a submissive, sensible, and withal singularly wide-awake body of men, who are not going to get into scrapes, or to lose marks, who mean to make the best of a bad job, and to pass through their period of imprisonment as easily and with as little discredit as may be. The nearest approach to unreasonable impatience that I ever knew manifested by a lawyer proceeded one day from a well-known London solicitor, who, when discussing with me the unexpected and seemingly inexplicable release of a prisoner who had been sentenced to a very long term of imprisonment for a very shameful crime, remarked to me, with unconcealed

bitterness, "The English are the most forgiving people in the world. They'll pardon anything, provided you haven't touched their beloved half-crowns."

So much for the best class of prisoners, the lawyers. But who are the worst? My unhesitating reply will doubtless create a good deal of surprise. Undoubtedly they are, of all people in the world, the doctors. The "stars" who gave by far the greatest amount of trouble, the prisoners who were the most prompt to take offence, the most prolific in their grievances, the most exacting about their rights, were found among the very limited medical fraternity that I met at Parkhurst. The doctors were few, but the few there were made up, and more than made up, by the frequency, pertinacity and bitterness of their complaints, for the smallness, the honourable smallness, of their numbers.

These remarks apply to all, with one exception, of the doctors whom I have encountered. And the cantankerousness—I know no better word—I am referring to may therefore be fairly considered as in some way characteristic of the profession. I suppose it is attributable to the rigidity of their professional etiquette, to their readiness to assert their own dignity, to their habits of non-acquiescence in the opinions of their fellows. I do not for a moment suggest that these are not perfectly becoming features, but they are obviously not conducive to tractability, submissiveness, and self-abnegation. Doctors A., B., C., and D. were four out of the five medical men whom I knew amongst "star" prisoners, and certainly these four gave more trouble, raised more objections, claimed more privileges, preferred more complaints than any other forty men. It may be interesting if I attempt, by a rapid but faithful description, to give my readers some idea of these truly remarkable characters.

Doctor A. claimed to be not only a physician, but a barrister as well. He was in the prime of life, and was fond of drawing on his medical and legal knowledge, by applying the first to a diagnosis of his own numerous maladies, and the second to the assertion of his rights and the exposure of his wrongs. As I have already mentioned, prisoners have the right to see the doctor daily, if they like to join the ranks of the "casual sick." They have a similar right to see the Governor for the purpose of submitting applications and of formulating complaints. They may also claim the privilege—a privilege I never exercised—of appearing before the directors and inspectors and visiting committees at their periodical visits.

For many years A. rarely failed to avail himself of all these somewhat questionable privileges. Two days a week he saw the Governor, and the other four he attended the doctor's levee of the "casual sick." If he was not at one he was sure to be at the other. I should say he spent at least a fourth part, perhaps a third, of his time in hospital. He was a short, chubby, presentable man, with a glib tongue, a plausible speech, unparalleled mendacity and unabashed impudence. He could not possibly have really suffered, or lived through, all the dreadful maladies of which he claimed to be the victim. Diabetes, calculus, cancer, intermittent fever, influenza, throat disease, lung trouble—he suffered from them all, and sometimes from two or three of them at once. The curious thing was that he never lost weight throughout the run of all these terrible afflictions. He further contracted a painful limp, which was regarded by the "old lags" especially as quite a triumph of histrionic art. Once or twice on some special occasion he forgot all about it, and was observed to run with creditable agility, but it proved too useful to him to be discarded altogether. It enabled him to secure a place

all to himself at exercise, and it relieved him from falling into the ranks and keeping step with the rest of his party. It also procured him a special cushion on which to kneel at prayers in the chapel. There was not much in all these little exceptional privileges, but their charm in his eyes was that they were exceptional; it was the aim of his life to treat himself and to be treated by others as different from the rest of the prisoners, which, indeed and in truth, he was.

I do not suppose that he ever really imposed upon the doctors, but such medical knowledge as he possessed, and his unbounded impudence and his perennial pertinacity, were altogether too much for them. As water by its continual dropping wears away a stone, so he wore them out. Like the importunate widow in the parable, he troubled them. By his continual coming he wearied them. They admitted him into the infirmary, and kept him there till, for very decency, they could do so no longer. So soon as he was back at labour, his disease revived, and the same performance was renewed with the same result.

As I have said, he was almost as constant in his attendance on the Governor. He was always applying for special privileges, for exceptional advantages; and when, as was rarely the case, he had no purpose of his own to pursue, he assumed the rôle of a prison reformer. He pointed out defects and suggested remedies.

What made him still more terrible in the official eye was the minute knowledge which he professed of the law relating to prisoners and penal servitude. It was all mere bluff, but he never hesitated for a moment in throwing some hitherto unheard-of Act of Parliament at the heads of the bewildered authorities. I think he succeeded in imposing upon them. A very close intimacy, much

observation, and exceptional advantages were necessary before any one could gauge the value of his fluent familiarity with these little-known details of the Statute Law. It was impossible to contradict a man about the provisions of an Act of Parliament which you had never heard of before, and had no means of referring to, but which was cited in a pleasant and positive manner, with an assumption of precise verbal accuracy by an apparently well-informed professional man, who, moreover, calmly quoted the chapter and section of the alleged statute.

He was a mighty stickler for technicalities, and loved to turn the tables on the inspectors before whom he frequently appeared. It was almost an unfailing practice with him to put down his name to see the directors at their periodical visits. These are supposed to be made monthly, I think, but there is no regularity about them, and often when the weather is wet or cold or foggy, or for some other important reason, the place of the director, who has certain statutory powers, is occupied by one of the inspectors. This was always a golden opportunity for A.

Bowing courteously to the functionary before whom he stood, he would say, in the suavest manner conceivable, "May I be permitted to ask whether I have the honour to appear before a director or an inspector?" If "an inspector" was the reply, "Then, sir, I have no application to make to you. It is only a director who, by chapter this and by section that, can deal with my case." And he bowed himself out. Of course this was mere bounce; though the inspector could not technically settle the application, his hearing and his decision would be every whit as effective as the director's. The latter stay-at-home dignitary would not fail to endorse the decision of an inspector whom he had secured as a substitute.

Dr. A. once, by these devices, scored heavily in an

encounter with a governor. In a somewhat heated discussion over one of the technicalities which he delighted in, he spoke quite casually of the Governor as the "gaoler." The indignation which this remark created was immense. "How dare you speak of me in such a way, sir! I shall punish you severely. I was never so insulted in my life."

Dr. A. bowed profoundly, and replied, in a more insinuating tone than usual, "I meant no offence whatever, sir; I thought I was doing you honour by according you the designation which is yours by Act of Parliament. That is how you are referred to in the Statutes, and particularly in Cap. 60, Section 27, of the Act 28 and 29 Vic., which deals with the question at issue." Of course the Governor could not possibly punish a man for calling him what the Act of Parliament called him, but I'm none the less sure he would like to have done so.

A. was fond of appearing before the visiting justices, whom he frequently addressed at length in forensic fashion. I do not think he ever did himself any good by these displays, but they afforded him a change, and ministered to his sense of importance.

Though he proved so interesting as a character-study, it is doubtful if Dr. A. ever gained anything in the long run by these curious tactics. It is best not to halloo ere you're out of the wood, and a time arrived, some months before his discharge, when he had to cease from laying down the law, and to ask for favours. That was a bad time for the doctor. It is not to be wondered at that the officials whom he had worried, tormented, one might almost say persecuted, for years were not very eager to go out of their way to help him then, and the result was that he failed to obtain the return of a large number of marks which he had lost in the earlier days of his imprisonment. In fact,

in this respect he very unwillingly retained to the end the exceptional distinction which he had so long coveted. No, he was "not like other prisoners." He did about four months more "time" than he would have done had he shown himself more amenable to the customs and conventionalities of prison life. It was a dear price to pay for so very doubtful a distinction.

Dr. B., another convict who had been a provincial physician in large practice, was concerned in some very nefarious transactions, for which he was sentenced to penal servitude for life. He served, as a matter of fact, for about ten years, coming to prison some months after me, and leaving some weeks before me. He had the reputation of being a very capable practitioner; but as a prisoner, his tortuous conduct, ill-temper and readiness to take offence made him constantly dreaded by the officers and shunned by his fellow-prisoners. In addition to the conventional complaints against every one connected with his trial and conviction, and against the directors and governor, which complaints only differed from those of other quarrelsome prisoners by their frequency and their fury, the man was a confirmed and inveterate mischief-maker, who seemed to take a malicious pleasure in getting the officers around him into trouble and setting his fellow-prisoners by the ears. And this he manifested as regards the officers in a particularly evil way. He would obtain a trivial and exceptional favour from some inexperienced, easy-going, or good-natured officer, who was not acquainted with his peculiarities. Instead of treating it as an exception to be gratefully enjoyed and forgotten, he would immediately proceed to convert it into an habitual custom, and when it was noticed and checked by a principal officer, would at once reply, "Oh, I am only doing just what Mr. —— allowed me to do last week." A very

good way to get Mr. —— into trouble, ard prevent him ever doing a favour in the future to any other prisoner.

B. was one of my special plagues. I did all I could to avoid or ignore him. I told him plainly that I did not like his ways. That while he was doing himself no good, he was doing a great deal of harm to his fellow-prisoners, and causing the officers any quantity of unnecessary trouble. But it was all in vain. He would leave me alone for a week or so, and would then renew his persecution. "Balfour, I want to consult you at once on a matter of great importance." This was his invariable formula. Like all these grumblers, he was an uncommonly selfish man. Selfishness, I fear, is even more conspicuous in prison life than in the outside world. In truth, it is at the root of all extraordinary prison grumbling and complaints. The real grievance of these persistent and pronounced grumblers is that they are unable to obtain exceptional favours for themselves. They always want to get something different to the ordinary run of prisoners—something different, even if it may be something of little or no advantage.

I met B. first at Portland, and when I left him there in November 1897, he was a prominent singer in the Protestant choir. I returned to Parkhurst in April 1898, and I was surprised to find that he had drifted there, and still more astounded that he had abandoned the Protestant faith and was figuring as a full-blown and pronounced Roman Catholic. He was the last man in the world whom I should have suspected of spiritual heart-searchings, and I hope I am not uncharitable when I suggest that his change of religion may not have been wholly free from mundane motives. The learned and very able judge who tried and sentenced B. was also a Roman Catholic, and as he would certainly be consulted about the propriety of remitting any part of B.'s sentence, it may fairly be suspected that this worthy imagined that his change of

creed would not, to say the least of it, be counted to his disadvantage.

Dr. C. was a very different character; a quiet, inoffensive gentleman in manner and appearance, he revealed the special bent of his disposition by ceaseless controversy on every possible subject—on matters exclusively concerning himself primarily, and then on the mistakes and abuses of the prison system as affecting prisoners generally. I have met in the course of my life many disputatious characters. They are not unknown on boards of directors and on the benches of the House of Commons, but I confess that I never knew Dr. C.'s equal in this respect. There is, however, this allowance to be made for him. His conviction was, to say the least of it, open to very serious doubt, and he always sturdily and consistently maintained his absolute innocence. Personally, I am inclined to think that he was wrongfully convicted, and every allowance may well be made for a man who is labouring under so terrible an experience.

While in prison Dr. C. left no stone unturned to establish his innocence, and I believe that since his release he has adopted every available legal expedient to secure the same result. I was amused at the evident enjoyment which his encounters with Whitehall afforded him, and at his delight in his dialectical successes. I was told that his handwriting came to be regarded with something like terror at the Home Office. He possessed the great art of a true controversialist. He knew how to push an advantage home. On one occasion in a personal "set-to" with a director he drove the unhappy dignitary into such a corner as to provoke the unguarded exclamation that he (the director) "did not care a hang for the rules" —an admission which naturally afforded the widest scope for many sarcastic allusions in subsequent petitions.

To do Dr. C. justice, the abuses which he so pertin-

aciously attacked were real abuses, and I firmly believe that to him more than any other man, prisoner or official, is due the mitigation of the horrors of the "dry bath" to which I have referred. Nothing could exceed the vigour, pertinacity and courage of his exposure in various petitions to the Home Secretary of the disgusting degradation of that horrible practice. Let us give credit where credit is due. Had he been a much worse man than he was, all who ever suffered from that inhuman torture will admit that his services in this matter covered indeed a multitude of sins.

Dr. D., the last member of this medical quartette, is also undergoing a sentence of penal servitude for life for the same serious offence as cost Dr. B. his freedom. Dr. D. is, without exception, the most virulent and vexatious "star" prisoner I ever met. Indeed, it is hard to believe that such rudeness and spite, such readiness to take offence, such extravagance of speech and abuse can, in a professional man, be by any possibility consistent with a state of sanity. It is not pleasant to contemplate the spectacle of this poor old fellow, once a physician in large practice, spending the later days of his life in prison, passing day after day in fantastic tricks, in muttering and grumbling, in continual and unreasonable complaints, in daily quarrels, in rude and outrageous and opprobrious speech. If he ever displayed anything like the same recklessness and spite in freedom, there is little ground for wonder that he drifted at last into prison. The wonder would rather be that he had not stranded years before. Those who only know or judge of him by his conduct there, may in all charity attribute his dreadful infirmities to the suddenness and the shock of his terrible fall.

It must not be supposed that I put these men forward

as types of prisoners. Of course, they are nothing of the kind. I have been led to describe them in answer to a very pentinent question as to which among the many classes and grades of prisoners found at Parkhurst were the best conducted and which the worst. It is certainly curious that the four men whom I have just referred to as so conspicuous for their irritable self-assertion should be members of the medical profession. They are not types, but they stand respectively as the prominent representatives of all that is tricky, treacherous, truculent, and troublesome among prisoners. In fact, they embody and exaggerate the special features of a type. Another fact almost as singular remains yet to mention. Of these four doctors no less than three asserted their independence or accentuated their eccentricity by changing their religion. Two who were Protestants became Roman Catholics, and one who was a Jew embraced Christianity.

Before I conclude these reminiscences I should like to say a few words, very earnestly, as to the tardiness displayed by the authorities in releasing men from prison on the ground of serious ill-health. While we shall all agree that such relaxation of sentence ought only to be made with the utmost care and circumspection, they ought not to be deferred until the sufferer is practically in a dying condition. They have too frequently been so deferred. Two elderly well-known lawyers have been released on these grounds from Parkhurst during the past eighteen months, both in what was practically a moribund condition. One was so ill that he could not be removed from the Isle of Wight, and died, I believe, at Newport; the other, whom I knew very well, and who was a gentle and most inoffensive man, had to be removed in an ambulance, was with difficulty conveyed to his home in the North of England, and died within three weeks of his release. The

condition of the latter, and the incurable disease under which he was suffering, were well known to the authorities for months, and surely in both cases their discharge might have been accelerated, so that it should not appear, as it does now, to have been prompted not by humanity but by a desire to keep down the prison death-rate, and to avoid the inconvenience of an inquest. What makes this matter still more serious is that the local physician who attended the latter case made, as I am informed, no secret of his belief that he might have prolonged his patient's life had the poor old man been discharged six months earlier. As it was, he was literally sent out to die.

A sentence of penal servitude is, heaven knows, serious enough, but it ought not to be converted into a sentence of death.

Pausing in my narrative for a few moments to look at prison life as a whole, I am struck, as I dare say my readers will also be, by the fact that, while crime and sin and shame and sorrow are ever in the foreground of the picture, that while, in a word, tragedy is its predominating feature, yet in its varieties, its many shades, its startling incongruities, and (strangest of all) its humours, it is quite as complex and as many-sided as is life in freedom in the world outside.

My narrative will be imperfect if I omit to do justice to all these elements, if I fail to pass from grave to gay, from lively to severe. In truth, as my mind reverts to the long and dismal years that I have spent in prison, I find that it still fastens, as it did throughout all that terrible time, on the incongruities of prison life. Penal servitude, so it seemed to me then, and so it seems to me now, resembles life in freedom turned upside down, a condition of topsy-turvy that might attract and employ the eccentric and delightful humour of Mr. Anstey, Mr.

Gilbert, and some other of our more pronounced modern humorists.

A single and a very simple instance will illustrate my meaning. In the life of freedom, who are the people whom we wish to see most often, whose companionship are we most loath to lose? Why, the cheery, the sympathetic, the congenial. We cling fast to our friends, and in proportion to our pleasure in their society is our hope that we may rarely be separated from them. They constitute, in fact, the charm of our social life. But when by any chance similar qualities are found in a prisoner, the people—the warders and others—who observe and are attracted by them, have no better way of showing their respect and good-will than by wishing that the exceptional prisoner who is thus endowed may soon be released, may soon be taken from them, that, in fact, they may never see him among them again. In freedom you wish to keep your friend close by you, in prison you wish to see him depart. So it was with me in the hurried farewells which I exchanged with the numerous officials in whose charge I had lived for so many years on kindly terms of mutual respect and regard. So it was, too, at my formal leave-taking from the excellent Governor, who exclaimed as we parted, "And now, Balfour, good-bye! The best thing that I can wish you is that I may never see you again." A very dubious adieu among free men. The best of good wishes to a prisoner emerging from Penal Servitude. My readers should, therefore, ever keep in mind that prison life is exceptional, one might almost say unnatural, and that it cannot be judged by the ordinary standards that we apply, and justly apply, to life outside.

There is, in truth, scarcely a feature or an incident of prison life which, when looked at from the conventional point of view, will not appear strange, eccentric, or it may

be even comic. Take, for example, so mournful, so pathetic a function as a prison funeral. Unfortunately, deaths are not of infrequent occurrence at Parkhurst. This will not be wondered at when it is remembered that Parkhurst is principally and especially the invalid prison. It receives the lame, the halt, and the blind, the weak in mind and the infirm in body, and the proportion of men under medical treatment and of sick in hospital to men engaged in full labour is necessarily exceptionally high. There is, therefore, nothing to the discredit of Parkhurst or of the Parkhurst doctors in the fact that the death-rate there is much higher than in those prisons which receive and retain only active and healthy men. The deaths at Parkhurst in the year ending March 31 last were actually more numerous, and proportionately largely more numerous, than at both the two other great convict establishments of Dartmoor and Portland combined. In fact, when a man's health begins to give way at Dartmoor or Portland, he is hurried off to Parkhurst, if his condition will at all permit him to bear the journey, with a promptitude which would amaze those who are only accustomed to the proverbial deliberation of official methods. There is, therefore, a continual stream of invalid prisoners to the Isle of Wight. These facts account for the higher death-rate at Parkhurst. There is nothing unhealthy there but the inmates. From my personal experience I should pronounce it to be in itself one of the healthiest spots in the world.

When a death occurs in prison it is always followed by a coroner's inquest, although there may be no doubt whatever as to the cause of death. Of course, I was never present at such an inquiry, nor have I ever known of a prisoner being called as a witness. His evidence, I should say, might often be very valuable, and sometimes, perhaps, very awkward. I gather from admissions made to me

at times by officers that these inquests are sufficiently frequent to be somewhat perfunctory in character, and savour, so I have been told, of the family party order. There is really nothing special to investigate. There is a very good feeling, a very natural good feeling, between all parties. The coroner knows and trusts the doctor. The doctor understands and respects the coroner. Even the coroner's summoning officer, who is a very important person indeed, is complacent, and cordially facilitates the work. The jury, too, are conciliated and conciliatory. No time is wasted. So soon as the doctors have reported the nature of the death, and the result of their post-mortem examination, so soon as the necessary and, be it added, perfectly truthful assurances have been given that the deceased was properly treated and made no complaint, the coroner briefly sums up, and the stereotyped verdict is returned.

As a trifling gratification, the jury, in order to make and keep things pleasant, are then escorted in a batch round the prison premises. They are shown a party or two at work, they enter and inspect a clean cell or two, and the dismal business of the day is forgotten. This tour of inspection is in itself rather a festive and holiday function, particularly when the friendly and complacent principal warder, who is told off to escort the party round, so far forgets himself and his duties as to indicate, by a gesture, a wink, a nod, or a nudge, the presence or whereabouts of some notorious prisoner. The offensive curiosity of these jurymen visitors is often so ill-concealed that I have more than once caught myself wondering whether they showed half as much interest in the dead man whom they "sat upon" as they too obviously felt in the live men whom they stood and stared at so unblushingly.

It is rarely that a principal warder at Parkhurst now so

far forgets his duty and his humanity as to pander to this vulgar and heartless curiosity. But the practice of making an exhibition of certain well-known prisoners is by no means unknown, and ought to be sternly and universally repressed. I am not speaking without my book in this matter. No prisoner has suffered more annoyance in this way than I have done. At Portland I once had a couple of school-boys, play-fellows of the then Governor's sons (who made the prison yards their playground), brought into the tinsmith's shop and placed not more than a couple of feet behind me, so that they might get a good look at me, like children at the Zoological Gardens are placed close to the rails of the bear-pit. Another time at Portland several young naval officers who were inspecting the prison were even shown into my cell (which I had quitted for a few minutes), and allowed to amuse themselves there by turning over the pages of the open book which I had been reading and in scrutinizing my scanty belongings. At Wormwood Scrubbs a whole party of visitors were brought to my cell door, and were actually prompted by the officer to look through the spy-hole, and observe how I was eating my midday meal.

Now after death and the inquest come the funeral and the grave. I believe the friends of a prisoner may, if they wish, provide the funeral. They certainly may attend it. Prisoners have an idea (it is really one of the numerous unfounded legends which hang about a prison, and with which prisoners love to torment themselves) that these funerals are conducted in an offensive and heartless manner. They slightly paraphrase the well-worn refrain of Thomas Hood's familiar verse and exclaim—

> "Rattle his bones over the stones;
> He's only a convict whom nobody owns."

It is scarcely necessary to say that this is absolutely

unfounded. Everything is conducted decently and in order. A hearse and mourning coach combined (a curious vehicle called, I believe, a "shillibeer,") takes the coffin to that portion of the cemetery at the pretty village of Carisbrooke where the interment takes place, and there the usual burial service is reverently read by the officiating clergyman. In these solemn matters kindly death has obliterated the distinction between bond and free. There is, moreover, a warder, a most respectable and trustworthy man of staid, not to say dejected, appearance whose singular duty it is to follow the coffin to the grave and to mourn. So that in cases (and, alas, there are many) where no friends of the deceased are present, the body is never absolutely unattended to the grave. Of course, all these details seem shockingly formal, but it must be admitted that formality and conventional sorrow are often not unknown at other funerals.

Leaving this especially gruesome feature of convict life, or more strictly speaking, death, I should like to endorse the opinion which has recently been expressed by more than one eminent English and foreign penologist, that convicts as a class, particularly habitual criminals, are distinguished by certain pronounced and singular developments. This is so true that in the first stages of penal servitude it is sometimes difficult for a newcomer to realize that the men among whom he is thrown at exercise, and with whom he will afterwards be associated at labour, are really of the same species as the people with whom he has mingled in freedom. The beings who surround him seem more like grotesque imitations, pantomimic caricatures of real men than men themselves. They all look alike, and are all hideous. It takes time to distinguish them in the same way as ordinary human beings in the outside world are distinguished. The change

of appearance due to the prevailing system of hair-cropping, shaving, and clothing is enormous. They seemed to me when I first saw them at Wormwood Scrubbs to be like animals. They were all noses and ears and eyebrows. Then there was also the "penal servitude complexion," referred to recently by Mr. T. P. O'Connor, which overspreads the entire face and alters its expression —it certainly altered mine—the ruddy hue of health and vigour turning to an ashy grey and corpse-like tinge, the direct result of care and fretting, of inferior food and insufficient exercise in the open air.

But of all these distressing physical features, the one which struck me first, the one from which I never could escape, and to which I could never get accustomed, was the abnormally protruding and overlapping ear. This "criminal ear" has been frequently commented on lately by the scientists to whom I have referred, and I unhesitatingly endorse their observations. Sitting, as I did at Wormwood Scrubbs, behind four or five hundred prisoners, it appeared to me that I was among an entirely different species of human beings, ape-like, baboon-like, weird. Such ears would have delighted the late Mr. Darwin—they were startling confirmation if not of the truth, at least of the probability of his theories concerning the descent of man. It must have been the sight of such a pair of ears that suggested to Nathaniel Hawthorne his fantastic romance of *Transformation*. I caught myself at times instinctively feeling my own ears, and complacently comforting myself by the reflection that I had escaped this widespread and repulsive deformity. A warder once assured me that it was positively trying to be perched at chapel a few inches above the great crowd of prisoners, and to look down upon the ears below him. To use his own words, "It was sickening."

Abnormally bushy and aggressively ferocious eyebrows are another curious characteristic of the convict class. I wonder if there is any connection between the close cropping of the hair on the top of the head and the growth of hair upon the forehead? These prominent physical characteristics were so conspicuous at Parkhurst that they fascinated me. I looked for them so keenly, and observed them so often that when the happy time arrived for me once more to breathe the blessed air of freedom, to walk the streets, and ride on trains and trams, it seemed as if I had returned to dwell again among my own kind—a different race of human beings, endowed with normal ears and eyebrows.

But there are incongruities of quite another kind which have nothing to do with the physical peculiarities of prisoners or the obligations which attach to our common humanity. Any observer will be struck by the totally different way of looking at things which is shown in prison to that prevailing in ordinary life. The blood-stained murderer, for instance, who is regarded with ill-concealed abhorrence by the world at large, who inspires a kind of awesome interest, who is at times spoken of as bearing the mark of Cain on his brow, is rather a favourite than otherwise in prison. He excites no horror; he is looked upon, indeed, with no small degree of pity. You continually find him employed and trusted as orderly in the library or infirmary or elsewhere. Speaking of murderers reminds me of a curious instance of the matter-of-fact way in which the authorities regard the most solemn and the most terrible incidents of human life. The local prisons are furnished annually with carefully prepared, printed inventories of stores and appliances in use in those establishments. And I shall never forget the start it gave me when, in turning over the pages of

these somewhat dreary inventories, I found that they recorded, in adjoining pages, and quite as a matter of course, the following items:—

Communion Service (Protestant)—Lecterns, palls, patens, purifications, surplices, vases, veils, desks, altar, dossals, flagons, frontals, frontals super.

(Roman Catholic)—Altar, bells, candlesticks, crucifixes, cards, altar cloths and services for altar, cruets, missals, *prie-dieu* stands, cruet stands, missal stoups for holy water, surplices, tabernacles.

Execution Apparatus—Bags, boxes, caps, rods, ropes, sand, straps, tackle, wire.

I need not belabour the above. It tells its own tale, and suggests its own commentary. I will only add one remark. The compositor who sets up the type of these inventories may himself have escaped only by the mercy of God, and through the clemency of the Crown, from a personal and tragic contact with the bag, the box, the cap, the rod, the rope, the sand, the straps, the tackle, the wire of the "Execution Apparatus." I comfort myself by the reflection that by the like mercy he may now be building his hope of a new life on the efficacy of the great truth which the Communion Service commemorates.

Many minor improvements have been effected in my time in the treatment of convicts. There was one change, however, which was the reverse of an improvement, and which nipped in the bud one most beneficial innovation, which was attributable to the experience, the good feeling, and the wisdom of the then Governor, Lieutenant-Colonel Plummer. I have already borne a willing but utterly inadequate testimony to his noble and unwearied efforts to strengthen and yet soften the penal system, and to raise the spiritual and moral tone of prisoners.

He had been struck, as all who are really acquainted

with the actual life of a convict must be struck, with the evils attending the isolation and idleness of close confinement. It should be borne in mind that these evils are as manifest among the middle-aged, or even the elderly, as they are among the young. The man of education often succumbs to them as fully as does the most ignorant of agricultural labourers who may have drifted, almost unconsciously, into crime. Seriously as this isolation is felt every day of the week, it is especially hurtful on Saturdays. On that day men are recalled from labour a few minutes after eleven in the morning, and are shut up in their dreary cells without break or interval till past nine o'clock on the following morning, a period of close on twenty-two consecutive hours. The Saturday half-holiday, as it is called, and supposed to be, is, therefore, not a period of rest, or self-improvement, or even relaxation, but a time that is hated and abhorred by ninety-nine per cent. of the prisoners.

They have probably read their books or have grown tired of reading, and have nothing whatever that is decent or useful to occupy their minds. This is the seed-time of all that is worst and most corrupted and degrading in prison life. The man who gets out of his cell for an hour or two to engage in some rough menial work, such as scrubbing a floor, or washing a landing, or polishing railings, or cleaning steps, is regarded as a lucky man by his fellows who are still caged up. Of course, all this would be obviated if, as every one would expect, advantage were taken of the cessation of labour to allow prisoners more open-air exercise, even if it were absolutely silent exercise.

It occurred to Colonel Plummer that the dismal horrors of the Saturday afternoon might be alleviated to well-conducted prisoners, at all events, by allowing them the

use of a few sheets of foolscap paper and pen and ink, the paper being folded into a kind of note or copy-book, in which they could record their impressions of what they read, make notes as to what they should write about to their friends, or attempt some literary work which with many convicts was an unfailing source of not unprofitable amusement. I have heard of a very fair metrical version of the Psalms which was compiled by a prisoner on Saturday afternoons. No kindlier privilege, more truly benevolent, or more highly appreciated, was ever bestowed, and I never heard of its serious abuse. In fact, it could not well be abused, for the note-books were collected late in the afternoon, and their contents carefully and very properly scrutinized by the school-masters. Any one accustomed to writing, who has been deprived of pen and ink and paper for a whole week, will realize what this boon meant to those among us who were educated men. So soon as it was granted to a few, it was eagerly sought by scores, and probably the kind-hearted Governor may have erred in the liberality with which he accorded this boon, but that is surely a failing which leant to virtue's side. If a failing at all, it was infinitely more honourable than many highly official merits. Speaking from my own experience, the Saturday afternoon was at once transformed. It became the happiest two or three hours of the week. Instead of its being wholly absorbed by a contest in which bad light, close type, and failing eyesight waged a continual war with one another, it soon was dedicated to one of the most profitable of all tasks, the record of the week's reading, and often to something like a summary of the books that had been read.

When Colonel Plummer took his much-regretted departure, his successor, not by any means an unkindly or

harsh man, seemed at first to have been sent down to alter nearly everything that Colonel Plummer had done, and one of the first things that he pounced upon was these prisoners' note-books. He "had never heard of such a thing before." It must, therefore, be objectionable, and probably dangerous to boot. According to the new chief, who was fond of spoken and written epigrams, Parkhurst on a Saturday afternoon was "more like a college than a convict prison"—the most conclusive and unintentional tribute to the effect of this simple and blessed privilege. Until it had been granted Parkhurst on a Saturday was, it might have been said, more like a hell than an abode of human beings. Not suddenly but surely the privilege was withdrawn. As the note-books got filled up they were not renewed. When it came to my turn to apply for a new one (I filled up about four a year) some difficulties were made. The new book was withheld for a week or two, and then on a fresh appeal by me was granted, somewhat grudgingly. After a short time the privilege was withdrawn altogether.

I felt the loss so keenly that for the first and only time in my long imprisonment I drew up a petition to the Home Secretary. I felt that I was not only pleading for myself, but for many others. I made it as short and as respectful as possible, but I ventured to point out very temperately that the privilege recently granted and now withheld had been enjoyed by prisoners at a time when prisons were mere sties of iniquity and hotbeds of contagion. That we owed two of the noblest books in the world, *Don Quixote* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, to the fact that their authors when languishing in prison, in other and much less merciful days, were still permitted to enjoy what was denied to us, free access to pen and ink.

In about a couple of weeks I received my answer.

The Governor was too truthful a gentleman to pretend that my petition had ever reached the then Secretary of State at all. I had known the late Mr. Ritchie personally, and I do not think he would have rejected so reasonable an application. My single ewe lamb petition had met the unconstitutional fate which attends nine-tenths of the petitions sent up to the Home Secretary. It had been intercepted on its way to the Home Secretary, and had probably got no further than the portfolio of some superior clerk. Instead of the usual formula that the Secretary of State regrets there are no grounds for granting whatever is asked for, I was put off with a bald notification that my application to have the use of writing materials on Saturday afternoons could not be complied with. I bowed, and made no reply, but even at this distance of time I do not like recalling what I felt.

It is not to be wondered at, seeing my pen was thus arbitrarily snatched away from me and I lost it for so long, that it has not since I recovered its free use adapted itself to the coining of pretty phrases about prison life.

## CHAPTER XIII

### FAREWELL TO PARKHURST. RETURN TO FREEDOM

To complete the account of my personal experiences at Parkhurst, I may mention very briefly the various occupations which were assigned to me. In doing so I shall endeavour not to trench any more than is absolutely necessary upon the chapters in the second part of this work which deal with prison labour, in which I shall again be compelled to revert to some of my own experiences. They necessarily are the bases on which my opinions and suggestions are formed.

For the first few years I was placed in a section of "28 Party," consisting of "star" prisoners only, who were engaged principally in various kinds of sewing. I am afraid I made but an indifferent seamstress. However, I learned some of the mysteries of the craft, and in doing so became familiarized with certain words and phrases which never before had any significance to me. Basting, pleats, and gussets, herring-boning, button-holing and the like were duly acquired, and when I sighed for some more laborious occupation—for I confess that ordinary needlework always seemed to me like solemn trifling—I was given to make gromets and fenders for the sides of vessels. The latter work is decidedly interesting, and I became fairly proficient at it. I found that I could turn out with ease more than the daily quota of work expected of me,

and, rather to the disgust of some of my comrades, who complained that I "was giving the show away," I made it my object to deliver one or two more fenders per diem than I need have done. I found that it was largely a matter of knack. But I had always the uncomfortable feeling that however many fenders I turned out, I was never really earning my daily bread; at least such was my fancy, or shall I say my fear? This feeling so grew upon me, the sense of being engaged upon unprofitable labour became so irksome, that I at last decided, contrary to my disposition and habitual practice, to apply to the Governor for a change.

I appeared before Colonel Plummer, who listened to my application with his usual courtesy and patience.

"Could you give me, sir," I said, "some occupation somewhat more adapted to my taste and experience?"

The Governor considered for a moment, and replied—

"You are just the man for clerical work. There is plenty of that in the printers' shop. But stop, let me see. You are a doctor's man. You have been placed in '28 Party' by his orders, and before I can move you you must get his consent. Put your name down to see him to-morrow, and I will speak to him in the meantime."

I followed his instructions, and appeared before the doctor the next day. He made no difficulty on the subject, and a few days afterwards I was transferred to the printers' party. I was very glad of the change, for the only prisoner at Parkhurst with whom I had contracted any intimacy was working there. I did not expect any opportunities for familiar intercourse with him, but I felt that it would be pleasant for me, and for him, too, that we should be working in the same room, probably, it might be, near to one another, or even side by side. We should neither of us feel that we were any longer

quite alone. We should both be delivered in some degree from the sense of isolation and loneliness which is one of the most distressing features of prison life.

Unfortunately, these anticipations were not fulfilled. The Master Printer of those days was a rather incompetent and very self-important personage, who, by a rare combination of tact and good luck, by obsequiousness to his superiors and blustering to his men, had obtained a position for which he was not really qualified. For some reason or other, probably because he thought I knew too much for him, and it may be because he suspected that I should hereafter relate my experiences, he said he did not wish to have me in his party, and he took no pains to conceal that fact from me.

"What have you come up here for?" he said gruffly.

"The Governor sent me," I replied.

"I suppose you asked him?" he rejoined.

This was not a very promising commencement, but I was not disposed to engage in a personal dispute, so I merely repeated that the Governor had sent me.

"Well, then," he sneered, "you must make yourself as useful as you can. Go and pick up the sheets as they fall from that press."

This again was not a very inviting task, and not more intellectual, it must be owned, than fender-making or herring-boning. However, I made no demur, and for the best part of the time that I remained in the party I did this or similar manual drudgery. I had hoped that I should get some practical notion of printing as a trade; I did not think then, I do not think now, that it was a presumptuous or unduly ambitious desire. One or two of the men who were engaged as compositors (save the mark!) were agricultural labourers who could not spell. But this was the way in which the printers' shop was then con-

ducted. These rustics were not sufficiently intelligent to notice the ineptitude of the management and the incompetency of the Master Printer.

Sometimes I was employed in "feeding" the "guillotine," a hideous machine well deserving its ghastly name, which cuts the paper to a uniform size and shape. At other times I carried heavy loads of printed matter from one department to another, and finally I was engaged in arranging the sheets of the inventories of prison stores for binding. I was amused with the orders that the Master Printer (who like many other half-educated men was fond of fine language) gave me respecting this latter task. I was to collocate them after he had allocated them. I could not for the life of me understand what he meant, but I am thankful to say that I appeared to do what he wanted.

It was in the printers' shop that I had the misfortune to undergo my second and last report for an alleged infraction of the prison rules. I had been ordered one day to clean out an ancient and very dirty paste-pot. Now that is a task of which I have no doubt many of my readers have experienced the difficulties, or at least the discomforts, in the more agreeable surroundings of their own homes. Paste seems to be endowed with an innate propensity to fasten itself upon the hands and garments of the most dexterous manipulator. It did not spare me, and when I had finished the job I found myself in a most deplorable mess. One lump of paste in particular I found adhering to my elbow. I took up a small piece of waste paper and removed it, crumpled the paper up in my hand and foolishly placed it in my single pocket. I will confess that I thought it would come in usefully in helping me to repair one of the books in my cell which was in rather a dilapidated condition. I thought nothing more of it until I

was searched on parade before returning to my cell. I then held it conspicuously in my left hand with my open handkerchief. Of course the searching warder saw it. I meant him to do so. I had never intended to conceal it. He was a very subservient henchman of the Master Printer, and was, of course, aware of that functionary's feelings towards me. He may have thought the paper contained a quid of tobacco. He snatched it from my hand, examined it gravely, and placed it in his pouch.

The reader will judge of my surprise when I found next morning that I was to be charged before the Governor with having illicit property in my possession.

The trial, as I now recall it, was a most amusing proceeding, but at the time I felt it very keenly indeed. A prisoner who is charged with an offence is taken down to the punishment cells, rigorously searched and ordered to remove his boots and put on a pair of excessively large felt or list slippers, in which he has to shuffle as best he may from the cells to the adjudication room, or, as we should say in ordinary English, "court-house." Before he is taken there he is visited in the punishment cells by the doctor, who has to certify that the prisoner is in a fit state of health to undergo punishment. The doctor who visited me has long since left Parkhurst. He seemed to be intensely interested in the particulars of my offence, and when I related them to him, he laughed most heartily. Colonel Plummer, when he heard the charge and my defence, was equally amused. The peccant packet was produced with all solemnity, and placed conspicuously on the table before him. The Governor touched it cautiously with the end of his pen—he was evidently familiar with the objectionable properties of paste.

"This is not a serious offence, Balfour," he said as he pronounced judgment, "but the rules are necessarily strict

and must be adhered to. No prisoner must indulge himself in a—in a pinch of paste. Don't do it again. I don't suppose you meant to eat it. I dismiss the charge."

"Thank you, sir," I said. "I can assure you I didn't mean to eat it. I am sorry you have been troubled with the matter, but I would much rather you punished me than that I should in any way lose your confidence."

"Oh, that you have not done," he said; "so go away and get your dinner."

I returned to my own cell triumphant, but I realized that I must never again give the Master Printer or his minion the shadow of a chance to do me harm. And I never did.

Shortly afterwards, I was laid up with a severe attack of acute lumbago which kept me in hospital for some weeks, and the doctor, on my discharge from the infirmary, told me he thought I had better return to "28 Party." I was quite of the same opinion.

In connection with this attack of lumbago I must not omit to mention an inconsiderate, not to say brutal, practice in dealing with sick men. There are so many invalids at Parkhurst that the regular infirmary is insufficient to hold them, and men who do not appear to be dangerously ill have to be sent to a kind of supplementary infirmary in one of the ordinary Halls. That was my case. So soon as the doctor has given the order for the patient to be admitted, he is weighed, clean sheets are served out to him, and he is sent, with the sheets across his arm, in charge of an assistant warder first to his own Hall to collect his books and clothes from his cell, and then to proceed, as best he may, to the supplementary infirmary. Now, my cell at that time was on the top landing of A Hall, a large and lofty building, and though I could hardly put my feet to the ground or drag one leg after

another I had to undertake this difficult journey. It proved a work of time. I arrived at A Hall in such a deplorable condition that the kindly principal warder who was in charge of the Hall refused to allow me to attempt to mount the many flights of iron stairs that led to my cell. "Sit down there," he said, "and I'll send somebody up to get your things." It was almost the pleasantest order I received during my imprisonment. My books, my letters, and clothing were brought down for me to convey them to the infirmary. I rose with difficulty to receive them. In the state in which I then was they were quite a formidable load. And, still accompanied by the assistant warder, I started for my destination. I could only proceed at a snail's pace; I was in excruciating pain; all my strength seemed to have left me. I tottered or staggered rather than walked. As soon as we were out of A Hall and out of the sight and hearing of the principal warder, the assistant warder turned abruptly to me and said that he was ashamed not to be able to offer me, in the state I was then in, some assistance. "I want to," he said bluntly, "but I daren't. If I were to be seen carrying your load or helping you, I'd be 'run in' and fined half-a-crown, for it's contrary to the rules. The only help I can give you is to tell you to take your own time. Don't mind me. While I'm looking after you I'm not doing something else." I thanked him, told him I quite appreciated his position and good intentions, and that perforce I would take my own time.

It seemed an interminable business, but after many halts and much suffering, I reached my goal. Once inside the infirmary, I was relieved of my burden and sank exhausted on my new bed.

What might be the object of such a stupid regulation, hurtful to the invalid and wasteful of the officers' time, I

have never been able to determine, and I have never found any officer who could enlighten me.

During the middle period of my imprisonment I had two or three illnesses. I never stopped longer in hospital than I could help, and always applied to the doctor to discharge me instead of waiting to be discharged by him. I shall speak hereafter of life in the infirmary, but I must not conclude my personal narrative without bearing a willing and grateful testimony to the patience, skill and kindness of the medical men and of all the hospital staff. They are often abused or rather maligned by cantankerous prisoners, but I am confident that whenever the doctors fail it is the fault of the system and not of the men who administer it.

Out of hospital I continued in "28 Party," with one brief interval of a month, when I was engaged on special work until November 1, 1904. I was employed during a portion of the time as orderly, having charge of the store-room, which contained the various tools used by the party, many of which were formidable and some valuable. At length, through the kindness of Captain Conor, the present Governor, I was appointed to the post of "librarian orderly," and entered at once on its most congenial duties. I had long desired the post, and continued most happily occupied by it until March 1906, a month before my release. The work was excessively heavy and really somewhat beyond my strength. I often returned to my cell so exhausted that I could hardly eat my dinner. Rest, not food, was what I most required. But I persevered because it was a continual delight to me to occupy myself among books and to be employed in connection with the very best agency for good which is to be found in a convict prison—the library. Far be it from me to underrate the work of the doctor and the chaplain, but I must in all

honesty acknowledge that I regard the library as the most successful factor in promoting the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the unhappy men who are congregated in convict prisons. As regards myself I believe that I owe, under Providence, the retention of my reason, and with it the preservation of my life, during the ten years and more that I was a convict entirely to the books which were at once my consolation, my instructors and my friends.

I shall speak of the humours of my duties when I refer later on to prison libraries. It is sufficient for me to say here that the chaplain, who is in supreme command of the library, and the school-masters who assist him, were all most assiduous in their efforts to make the distribution of books a blessing to the men. And it was a joy to me to co-operate, however humbly, in their work. One of the school-masters has told me since my discharge that it was apparent to them all that my task as librarian orderly was a labour of love, and I may say with all sincerity that I regard this as one of the greatest compliments I have ever received in my chequered life, for it shows me that at Parkhurst, at least, I did not live wholly in vain.

It was while I was librarian orderly that I had the personal experience, which I have already briefly referred to and which I mention here again, because it reveals in a very striking manner a most curious feature of prison life. I have said that I had not seen myself for close on nine years. There is no such thing as a looking-glass in any of the halls or cells, but there was one in a corner of the library, and I came across it quite by accident. I shall never forget the shock. I started from it with affright, for I can honestly affirm that I did not recognize a single feature of the face that I beheld reflected in it. It was that of a perfect stranger to me, I could not believe that I was I. I learnt then for the first time the full and

sorrowful significance of the tears which I had seen in the eyes of the two or three relatives and dear friends who had visited me in my bonds.

On May 26, 1905, the warder on duty on my landing opened my cell door, and said: "Balfour, you're in Orders; you've got your blue dress. It's come at last." Every long-term convict on entering the last year of his imprisonment was at that time raised to what is called "the special stage" which concedes certain additional privileges and involves a change in the colour of his clothes. Blue has been chosen, I suppose, because it is regarded as the emblem of hope. This concession is now made in a modified form to all convicts. It is the general experience that the last year of a long term of imprisonment passes far more slowly than the others. But it was not so with me, for I was very busily occupied. In addition to my heavy duties as librarian orderly, I had during a large part of the year charge of the general store-room, from which all stores for the use of the prisoners, including every kind of clothing, are issued and into which all torn and used-up clothing is returned. The last year did not, therefore, pass slowly with me, but it was none the less a very trying time. In addition to the anxieties incidental to my approaching release, the prospect of rejoining my friends and of entering again upon an active life in the world, there were the inevitable doubts as to the possibility of finding creditable employment and of earning an honourable livelihood. And to all of these was added a strange sense of the precariousness of the impending termination of my prison life. My mind, which had sunk into a kind of apathetic lethargy, which had become, as it were, blunted by the experiences of penal servitude, now, as the time of release drew near, awoke again. Every day in the year was now in a sense a last day, for it was a

day not to be lived again in prison. My life seemed to have become a life of last days. Whitsuntide was close at hand. How I looked forward to it! It would be my last Whitsuntide in prison. Then there were the many domestic anniversaries consecrated to the memory of dear ones whom I had lost, or associated with those who still were spared to me. Then came my "last birthday." Birthdays as we grow older retain little of the festive character which is associated with them in youth, but I am free to confess that my last birthday in prison was a day of unutterable joy. Up to then I had never thought that I should live to breathe again the blessed air of freedom, but with the arrival of that day it seemed to me the odds which had been so decidedly against me were suddenly changed into odds in my favour. The mercies which had preserved me until then would surely not be now withdrawn.

Then came my "last Christmas." Christmas in prison has no pleasant associations, no kindly intercourse with family and friends, but that Christmas Day was the happiest in my life. It had but one drawback. I could not share my joy with those of my unfortunate associates for whom it was not "the last."

Then came the New Year, my "last New Year's Day." What a change it brought with it in my mode of thought and speech! It was no longer as it had been: "If I live, I shall be free this day three years, or two years, or next year, but oh, thank heaven! this year, this very year, I shall be loosed from my bonds."

Then came my "last Good Friday." But before that approached I was aware in a dozen different ways that the end was nigh. There was no tangible relaxation of discipline, and yet I was conscious of a more indulgent and sympathetic tone among the officers and of an increased

display of good-will on the part of my fellow-prisoners. I had, moreover, to go through an entirely novel set of formalities. My hair and beard were allowed to grow. My state of health seemed to be a matter of greater anxiety to the doctors. Even the excellent Governor and Deputy-Governor seemed to regard me more as an individual personality with a name, a character and above all, a future, than as Convict V 460. I was photographed, and a very funny figure I cut in the picture, with a dummy shirt-collar which has been photographed hundreds of times. I was measured for clothes, I was interviewed. I had documents to sign; I was consulted about my destination. All these details were gone through by the authorities with a kindliness and a tact for which I shall ever be grateful; and yet not one word was said to me as to the exact date of my release—I was left to guess that, and I guessed very often and very hard. I only found it out for certain by a curious chance two days before the actual time. I knew it, but I could not reveal my knowledge. I had to live those two days in an assumed ignorance of what was impending. It was the most difficult task I ever had in my life.

I had been removed into the infirmary, not because I was actually ill, but for the kindly purpose of giving me a rest and an opportunity of recovering some of my lost strength. I was permitted to occupy my time in completing a new library catalogue, which was very much wanted. I had been told that I should never finish it, but I had fully resolved to do so. I meant it to be my legacy, my farewell offering to Parkhurst. It was all I had to leave. When I knew for certain the day of my release, I had still a good four days' work before me, and only two days to do it in. Those two days were Thursday the 12th and Good Friday the 13th of April. I resolved

that I would not be beaten. It was the middle of the month, and it was light in my infirmary cell by five in the morning. I got up quietly about half-past four, washed, dressed, arranged my cell for the day, and was at work by a few minutes after five, and I worked on continuously till light failed me a little after six in the evening. I had only one substantial break —on Good Friday afternoon—my last Good Friday— when I enjoyed my last hour's "association exercise" with the one faithful friend and companion who for many years had shared with me the only time in all the week when I was able lawfully to use the sacred gift of speech. That is too solemn and painful an experience for me to enlarge upon even here.

Unfortunately when night fell my self-imposed task was not quite finished. I had still a page or two to write. I did not sleep much that Good Friday night. I was up on the Saturday even earlier than before. It was a bright morning; I was at work before the bell rang, and I finished the last lines of the catalogue as my cell door was opened and my breakfast handed in. Nobody in the infirmary but myself and my friend knew that it was my last meal in prison. I gulped down the food as quickly as I could, and then leaned against my cell wall and waited. The infirmary officers had all gone to their breakfasts save a solitary "Breakfast Patrol."

In a few minutes I heard footsteps on the landing. The door was opened, and an assistant warder said to me quite naturally: "Balfour, you are wanted at the Governor's office. You are to bring your kit with you." I obeyed mechanically. I should like to have shouted, screamed, or danced. With a great effort I controlled myself and tried to assume an air of composure. I reached the office, was directed to a small ante-room

where all sorts of well-nigh forgotten articles—a white shirt, a white handkerchief, a necktie, braces, gloves, and the like—were lying on a table. I handled them with difficulty. I fumbled so dreadfully that the good-natured assistant warder came to my help. Then I appeared before the Governor. He was very kind, as he had always been to me. He told me that my son was waiting for me at the gate. He sent for him. We met and shook hands together for the first time for over thirteen years. I thanked the Governor and bade him good-bye, and, accompanied by my son, walked through the pleasant garden in front of the Governor's offices. A wicket in the great prison gate was opened for us. How I scrambled through it I cannot tell. There was quite a crowd of warders outside returning from breakfast and waiting to enter on the duties of the day. When they saw me with my son, there was a sudden hum of surprise. I honestly believe that it was also a hum of pleasure. They fell back to let us pass. An open fly was waiting for us; my daughter-in-law was seated in it. We jumped into the fly. I hardly realized what had happened, or where I was, or what I said.

After about an hour's drive we left the fly, I was taken along a little pier to a little steamboat, and a few minutes afterwards I woke up to the consciousness that I was on another element, that I was crossing the sea. Then I understood that the hills and woodlands we were so rapidly approaching were part of the mainland of my native country, and, more wondrous still, that I was FREE.

# PART II

## PENAL SERVITUDE AS ADMINISTERED

### CHAPTER XIV

#### DEFECTS IN ADMINISTRATION

I NOW turn with pleasure from my more personal narrative to discuss some of the details of the working of the penal system. Beginning at the beginning, I have something to say about the "probationary period" which every convict has to pass through at the commencement of his term of imprisonment. The length of that period has been considerably modified since I entered Wormwood Scrubbs in 1895. It was then a uniform term of nine months, which I myself underwent. It has now, I believe, been reduced to three months for "star" prisoners, that is to say, first offenders; to six months for intermediates, and it remains at nine months for recidivists.

From these alterations it may be assumed that the time of probation is considered by the authorities the most severe and trying portion of penal servitude. The probationer is allowed one hour's exercise a day and is kept hard at work for the remainder of the day in his own cell, in strict, that is to say, solitary confinement. The

probationary period is always referred to in familiar prison phraseology as "doing one's separates."

I have nothing to say against the theory of this probationary period; it seems to me a wise one. But I have much to say as to the way it is carried out. "Star" convicts "do their separates" at Lewes, Chelmsford, Stafford, and, I believe, at some other local prisons. I did nearly six months of mine at Wormwood Scrubbs, and the remainder (with the exception of the few days I spent at Parkhurst) at Portland. I suppose that, apart altogether from the question of punishment, the idea is that before a convict enters one of the great convict establishments, engages in its work and takes part in its life, he should be broken in to its rules, its duties and its routine generally. That is doubtless the object which most persons of ordinary intelligence would attribute to a probationary period. That may be the intention also of the Home Office, but if so the method of working renders it an absolute failure. The regulations, the practices, and the labour at the local prisons which I have just mentioned as the establishments where star convicts do their separates not only do not resemble, they are entirely different from, the system in force at any convict prison. The consequence is that when the unhappy first offender has done his separates and enters the convict prison he is utterly at a loss as to how to conduct himself and as to what is expected of him. Nothing can be more pitiable than his condition. He is an object of compassion to his new associates and an unmitigated nuisance to the officers who have to break him in to the ways of the place. All that he has learnt, at Lewes for instance, he has to forget as quickly as possible at Parkhurst. Everything is different: a different time of getting up in the morning, different diet, different regulations, different labour. If he be a conscientious man,

intent on not giving trouble, on conducting himself creditably, and on lightening the burden of his life by useful work, he will have mastered the Lewes system by about the time when he leaves Lewes. It is to the last degree distressing and painful to him to find that all that he has just learnt he has learnt in vain. He is at once bewildered and disheartened, often to such a degree that he makes no attempt—he has neither the will nor, perhaps, the ability—to learn everything over again.

I was struck with this anomaly (or may I say this absurdity?) every time "a new man" arrived at Parkhurst, and now that I am relating the facts in the quiet of my own home they appear to be nothing less than incomprehensible. I should have thought that the probationary, the preparatory, local prison would have closely resembled in all its details the greater establishment for which the convict was being prepared, and that, as a mere matter of efficiency in working, the probationer would be handed over to the convict authorities equipped at all points for convict life. The official answer—I may say at once that I attach little value to official answers—will probably be that the discipline of local prisons, their dietary and all their arrangements are intentionally, and indeed necessarily, different from those of convict prisons. But, like most official answers, that is really no answer at all. If the facts be so, so much the worse for the local prisons. It only shows that they are not suitable places for the training of convict probationers.

I am speaking of what I know, of what I experienced myself, when I affirm that as regards my life in a convict prison I learnt more during the weeks that I was at Portland than during the months I was at Wormwood Scrubbs. Therefore, the only change required is that men sentenced to penal servitude should "do their

separates" in convict, not in local prisons. This is surely not a very difficult change to make. Moreover, it would be attended with other and not inconsiderable advantages.

Speaking generally, I am bound to admit that the convict system is administered as a whole economically; that to my thinking, looking at it from a national point of view, is one of its most creditable features. The only detail which seems to me to be really wasteful is the money which is spent, or rather squandered, upon travelling expenses. No doubt the Government has some arrangement with the railway companies by which the travelling parties are conveyed at reduced terms; but, however ample the reductions may be, there is nothing to justify the waste of public money and of public time which these frequent journeys involve. To send a convict whose ultimate destination is Parkhurst in the Isle of Wight, or Portland in Dorsetshire, in the first instance to out-of-the-way places like Lewes in Sussex or Chelmsford in Essex, is surely a roundabout and extravagant proceeding. There are not only the travelling expenses of the convicts themselves, but also the expenses and the time of the officers who escort them.

Let us take an imaginary case, and see how it works out.

Half-a-dozen convicts (I am anxious to be fair, and therefore say half-a-dozen—it may be only one or two) are sent, on conviction at the Central Criminal Court, to, say, Wormwood Scrubbs or Wandsworth. That is doubtless a wise step. The men may be wanted in London for a short time for legal or other matters. Then they are dispatched by cab or omnibus across London, in charge of at least a couple of officers, to London Bridge or Victoria Stations. This costs money. They then proceed to Lewes at a further outlay, which includes the return fares to London and the travelling allowances of the London

officers, and of course their time as well. After three months or less, for the time the prisoners spent at Wormwood Scrubbs is included in the probationary period, the same men are sent off to Parkhurst, a cross railway journey entailing return fares to Lewes for the Lewes officers. At Cowes or at Ryde they are met by comfortable closed vehicles and driven to the prison gates. It may fairly be assumed that at least one-third of this outlay would have been saved if the prisoners had been sent in the first instance direct from London to Parkhurst.

Nor in other respects is there any attempt to economize. Supposing there is an escort from London to Parkhurst and from Parkhurst to London on the same day—a quite possible event. It would occur to a man of business to kill two birds with one stone and make one escort suffice for both parties. Instead of that the London officers return from Parkhurst and the Parkhurst officers return from London empty-handed, a double set of return tickets being thus absolutely thrown away. Of course these trips, with their travelling allowances and the break in the monotonous routine of duty, are highly appreciated by the officers, but as part of the money saved by a more sensible and economical system might well be devoted to an increase in their pay, they would not in that case suffer by, or, I imagine, object to, a change.

I can supplement the foregoing imaginary example by a case which actually happened and which shows how travelling expenses are thrown away. Some time ago, owing to the overcrowded state of the convict prisons, it became necessary to draft several men from Parkhurst to Dorchester, where there is a local prison. I never could understand the principle on which these drafts were selected. I am disposed to believe if there were any that the ultimate choice rested with the Home Office. At all

events, several men were told off to go to Dorchester, escorted by a principal warder and, I think, two assistant warders. The party arrived safely, and as some of the prisoners thus transferred were especially disagreeable men, there was great rejoicing at Parkhurst over their departure. In a very few days two of the best known and least liked were back again at Parkhurst, for so soon as they arrived at Dorchester, the officials there discovered that this particular couple of new arrivals were Jews, and there was no provision whatever at Dorchester for the observance of their religious rites. The consequence was that the ingenuous Israelites were sent back in hot haste, and at the public expense, of course, to Parkhurst, which is the only convict prison that rejoices in a Synagogue and a Rabbi. We hear a good deal now-a-days of surcharging local authorities with improper expenditure. I wonder if the official responsible for this careless and expensive blunder was surcharged its cost by the auditor of prison accounts? I leave this subject here, as there is no need to belabour an indefensible arrangement.

When speaking of defects in administration, I must not omit to say something on the subject of the constitutional right which all prisoners are supposed to enjoy of petitioning the Home Secretary on any subject connected with their imprisonment, and especially of applying for a reconsideration of their cases and a remission of their sentences. Nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the manner in which this right of petitioning is hedged in and hampered to a degree that largely renders the privilege nugatory. So far as I myself was concerned, as already stated, I only once availed myself of the opportunity of petitioning, and then on a matter not peculiar to myself personally. But in another way I know more about the subject than the authorities themselves, for

there is no reason now to conceal the fact that from the time I was in a position to communicate with other prisoners, it became a practice with them to consult me about their petitions. In fact, their communications were at one time so frequent that I had always one or two cases in hand, and I used to tell the men who consulted me that I regarded them as my clients. Latterly, my business as legal adviser fell off. I was known to be out of sympathy with frivolous complaints, and so eventually was mistrusted as "a pal" of the authorities.

I believe that there is a rule, or it may be rather a practice than a rule, that a prisoner can petition the Home Office once every six months for a reconsideration or remission of his sentence. I am told that it is practically certain that very little attention is paid to these petitions. I was not aware of that while I was in prison. I have heard it since my release. At the time when I was advising a prisoner I invariably told him that his freely-expressed belief that petitions were not read by the Home Secretary was quite unfounded. Although I had been (or perhaps, rather, because I had been) an active politician from my youth, I had formed a very high opinion of the character of our public official life. I honestly believed that it was a just subject for national pride, and that, though its intelligence might not be remarkable, its integrity was quite unquestionable, and that every promise or profession made by a Government Department would be adequately carried out both in letter and in spirit. I laughed at the doubts of my clients. I told them that the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy was one of the most solemn and most sacred functions of Government. I insisted that the Home Secretary, and he only, was responsible in such matters, that it was a work which he could not delegate to a subordinate,

and that he would do anything that he properly could on behalf of prisoners, knowing that any carelessness in regard to their petitions might involve the detention of absolutely innocent and often deserving men. This was my opinion at that time.

I have said that the prisoner is allowed to petition once in six months—a proceeding calculated to keep the prisoner quiet. On many occasions when I felt that injustice was being done, I never hesitated when it was possible, even at the risk of losing days of freedom if I had been detected, to assist in the preparation of these petitions. Had I known how little attention is paid to them, I should have hesitated. And yet I ought to have known, for I ought to have realized that the authorities, if they really paid any attention to petitions, would have noticed the glaring difference in the style of the petitions when prepared by a man familiar with legal forms to petitions previously sent by the same prisoner without assistance or advice. Indeed, I came to the conclusion from this that the authorities must and did wink at what I was doing. In any case, they may well be a little blind in such a matter, for I am certain many a man has been convicted through not knowing how to prepare for his trial, and that many others remain in the prison simply because they are not conversant with the way to prepare a petition. I have in my mind at this moment—I may say I have always in my mind—the case of a young and most respectable man, esteemed by everybody in prison, who is at this moment undergoing a life sentence simply because at his trial he was in such a state of mental distress and physical suffering that he could not adequately instruct his very able counsel. The real circumstances of the domestic tragedy have therefore never been brought to light. Out of mistaken tenderness to the faithless wife

who suffered death at his hands, in a moment of natural if not justifiable indignation, he has never yet brought the facts properly to the notice of the Home Secretary by way of petition.

Of all the many petitions which I drew up for prisoners or about which I advised, I only knew of one that produced the least effect, and in that case I was happily able to turn my political experience to account. There was a one-armed and one-legged "lifer," named Thomas. He had, he told me, murdered in a quarrel a woman with whom he had been associated, and he never made any pretence of innocence. I sympathized with him on account of his infirmity and because I believed that he really had repented, as was shown by his living a very orderly, industrious and quiet life in prison. He was quite a model prisoner. He had been provided before he came to prison with a very good artificial arm, and he was one of the cleverest mail-bag makers I have ever known in my life. Thomas's friends were about to appeal by way of petition for the third or fourth time, and he came to me and asked me as a great favour to suggest the lines on which his petition should run, for his friends were quite at a loss what to say on his behalf. It was a difficult request, for there was scarcely an extenuating circumstance in the case, and nothing to differentiate it from many similar cases. I was at my wits' end for a plea, when, fortunately, he told me that his crime was committed in Birmingham and that his petitioning friends were Birmingham people. I at once advised him to urge his friends to appeal as Birmingham men to the Birmingham Members, then all-powerful in the Government. It was at the time when Birmingham seemed to be ruling England. The Under-Secretary for the Home Department was a Birmingham man.

The letter went. What steps were taken I do not know, but it evidently became a Birmingham case, for, in an incredibly short time, my one-legged client became a free man. Indeed, they were in such a desperate hurry at the Home Office to set him free that the order came down one Saturday, and the man was released on the Tuesday morning following, all the curious formalities incidental to release from penal servitude being hurried through with breathless speed.

A charitable lady at Birmingham, a Miss Bally, who is nobly distinguished for the great interest she takes in discharged prisoners, and who is always seeking to find them honest employment, succeeded in getting Thomas a very respectable situation as the manager, I believe, of a Birmingham coffee-tavern. He did very well there. He was very grateful to me, and actually sent me a Christmas card, which the Governor allowed me to look at, telling me from whom it came, but, of course, under the prison rules I was not allowed to retain it. I have since heard, with great regret, that the poor fellow is dead.

I have been speaking, of course, of cases with which I have been personally acquainted, but I have heard occasionally of convicts released by petitions, and the curious fact is that no one is ever able to account for the reasons which have led to these exceptional results.

A prisoner who desires to petition puts his name down to see the Governor, attends before him the following day, and intimates his desire to petition. This is a matter of form, as the Governor, I believe, is bound to accede to the request. Next day the petition form is brought to the prisoner's cell at dinner-time, and he is allowed that day, and often a day or two more, during dinner-time, to complete it. But a great deal ought to be said about the

lack of all reasonable facilities for prisoners to write to their friends or to prepare petitions. A form is supplied, which is headed as follows: "The petition of —— humbly sheweth." It is addressed to the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for the Home Department. The prisoner is allowed a strictly limited space in which to state the grounds of his application. I have known many prisoners apply for permission to exceed these limits, but all such applications were refused. A man has practically less than two sides and a half of a sheet of foolscap in which to explain perhaps a very long and complicated transaction. The last and fourth page is, I believe, reserved for the Governor's observations. Now it must be evident that the space allowed is altogether insufficient, and that in many instances it reduces the right of petitioning to an actual mockery. Shams of this kind are unworthy of the Government of a great country. If the right of petitioning is often abused, as I have no doubt it is, let the opportunities of petitioning be reduced, but as a matter of decency let those which remain be treated as serious realities and not degraded into specious shams.

A good deal may be said to the same effect on the cognate subject of letter-writing. A prisoner is allowed to write periodically to his respectable friends at the following intervals, which I may say were much longer in the earlier part of my imprisonment. In the first and second stages (years), after earning 960 marks (120 days); in the third stage, after earning 720 marks (90 days); in the fourth stage, after earning 480 marks (60 days). He remains in the fourth stage until, as I have already explained, he is admitted to the special stage, when he may write after earning 240 marks (30 days). The privilege of writing a letter carries with it the right of receiving a reply.

I do not think the foregoing scale errs on the side of liberality. It is much to be regretted that the Home Office doles out the privilege of letter-writing with so niggardly a hand. It would really seem to be a practice which they feel bound to concede, but which they would like to deprecate and discourage. But I maintain, on the contrary, that it should be fostered and promoted to the fullest extent compatible with discipline. In the interest of the community at large, it is the worst thing possible that the ties which bind a prisoner to his relatives and friends should be seriously loosened, and much less wholly snapped asunder. Should a man be thus cast adrift, he is deprived of all the humanizing influences of domestic life; he will never become a good citizen or of any use to himself, or to the world at large.

It is clearly to the interest of the State that he should be encouraged to foster and retain every wholesome social tie, every tie that binds him to the parental roof, the home, the family; and the only way a prisoner can do this is by frequent and full correspondence—that is, by keeping himself in close touch with the dear ones from whom he is separated. Let it never be forgotten that, hard as the prisoner's lot may be, it is not to be compared in mental agony and distress, or often in actual suffering, to the shame, humiliation, anxieties, want, and misery which are often experienced by the relatives of prisoners, and especially by their parents, wives, and children.

I plead, therefore, for much more letter-writing than is allowed at present; but, in addition to this, it is of even greater importance, to furnish the prisoner with adequate facilities to express himself in his letters with freedom and fulness. As I have just shown, the rules lay down with elaborate precision the times when a prisoner may write a letter, but they say nothing about the facilities for

writing which the prison authorities are to afford. Now these are so miserably inadequate as to suggest the idea that the official mind is bent on neutralizing or minimizing the rules to the utmost possible extent. In fact, the rules are observed in the letter, but not in their spirit, niggard as that spirit is.

When a rule says that a prisoner may write a letter once a month, or every two or three months, or four months, as the case may be, it is surely to be assumed that he will be supplied with adequate opportunities for enjoying this privilege, but the opposite is the case. The rules concede a minimum, and the practice is to minimize that minimum.

Then the cells are dark, needlessly dark, for over and above the proverbial gloom of our English skies the cell windows, which are none too large in themselves, are shaded on the outside by great bars of iron, and the window-panes are elaborately frosted or bedimmed, as if the convict were begrudged the light of heaven, or as if it were supplied like gas or electricity at so much per cubic foot or volt. I never could understand why the natural gloom of prison cells should thus be intensified. The outside bars may be a sad necessity, though I doubt it, but that the very window-panes themselves should be robbed of more than half their capacity for the transmission of light is, it seems to me, a perfect superfluity of official naughtiness. Moreover, the table on which the prisoner has to write his letter is placed, of course, as far as possible from the window and in the darkest corner of the cell. This table is so small in itself and is so awkwardly constructed that wherever placed it would be ill adapted for writing upon. A prisoner so using it is forced to sit with his back to the dim light that creeps through the darkened windows, and thus the paltry quantity of that free gift of Heaven

which penetrates to the table is again seriously diminished. In fact, it is very difficult for an elderly or a short-sighted man to write a letter properly in his cell during the winter months. Nothing can be worse contrived for the purpose.

It was my practice to write very long letters, and the only way that I could get through them in the time which was then allowed was by converting my bed, which was right under my window, into a table, and by kneeling at the bedside while I wrote. When I did this and bolted or went without my dinner, I, who wrote quickly, could just get through my letter in the allotted time. If these were difficulties endured by a man who has been using a pen all his lifetime, it will be readily conceived what these hindrances mean to a prisoner who regards a pen as a strange and doubtful weapon, and who uses it with much the same amount of ease as I should wield a pitchfork.

The time allowed for letter-writing has lately been lengthened by the Home Office, much against the will, I fear, of some prison officials. But the appliances and conditions are as inadequate as ever. Now there is a capital, light, recently-erected school-room at Parkhurst, fitted with suitable desks, where prisoners might be allowed to write their letters in comfort, under the eyes of a warder. It would be a useful occupation for a Saturday afternoon. All letters when finished are read over by the school-master, the chaplain, or the deputy-governor, who has power, with the consent of the Governor, to erase, expunge, or cancel any objectionable paragraph. This, on the face of it, appears a strong proceeding, affording an opportunity for the exercise of an especially offensive kind of petty tyranny. But I am happy to add that I never heard of any such abuse. Such tyranny was certainly

never practised in my case, and, so far as I know, was never exercised at all in my time. In my own letters I made it a rule to speak frankly to my friends on every subject that interested me, except prison matters. Of course, I always remembered that my letters would be read by other people besides those to whom they were addressed, but, subject to the inevitable sense of constraint which such knowledge involves, I never minced my words or shrank from any particular subject. I comforted myself with the reflection that my censors were gentlemen, and they, to do them simple justice, never gave me cause to think otherwise.

In dealing with the subject of letters and of their possible suppression, I must not omit to notice the extraordinary mania for secrecy with reference to all that happens in prisons which characterizes the official mind. The word mania is really the only one in the language which is adequate. Prisoners are compelled when writing to their friends, or when receiving visits from friends, to preserve an absolute silence on all prison matters. They must not allude to their own grievances if they have any; and they must not refer to any event which has occurred in prison. If they do the letter will be stopped, the visit closed.

In the case of newcomers, the warder, who in the official phraseology "takes" the visit, will be sure to warn the prisoner beforehand to be careful in this respect. I was astonished and amused by the pains which were taken with me. "Be sure not to say anything about what goes on here," said the warder. "You quite understand? You mustn't say a word. If you did, and it got found out, I should get a half-sheet and be fined half-a-crown."

"What may I talk about, then?" said I.

"Oh, anything you like, except that. Be sure and say you are very well and very kindly treated."

"All right," I answered. "I can truthfully speak about the treatment."

"Of course you can," he rejoined in a wheedling tone. "But chaps like you often slip out awkward things so unexpected like."

I assured the good fellow that he need not be afraid, as I had other things to talk about than my prison experiences, which I should be glad to forget during the twenty minutes that my visit was to last. Here, again, the question of the duration of visits arises. Those twenty minutes cost a loyal and devoted friend who came to see me about £3 in travelling expenses and two days in time. That is to say, they involved an expenditure in cash of three shillings per minute, and in time of over two hours per minute—the latter item being the most serious.

I venture in this connection to submit another suggestion. It is, I believe, a fact that the Government have special arrangements with the railway companies as to the fares of convicts and warders in their frequent and often meteoric journeys, and I have heard that the railway companies good-naturedly grant the same privileges to prison officers who are not travelling on duty. My suggestion is that the Home Secretary should use his influence to obtain a like concession for the friends of prisoners who may be furnished with the necessary authority or permit for a visit. The production of such a permit at the booking-office should procure the issue of a ticket for the double journey at a single fare. The railway companies would lose nothing by this liberality, for the number of visits would be increased threefold and the companies would gain the blessings of a large and much-to-be-pitied section of the public.

While dealing with the question of convicts' letters, I would like to point out another very vexatious practice connected with letter-writing which might well be altered. Every letter from a prisoner to his friend has to be written on a sheet of paper specially provided for the purpose, and the first page of every such sheet is occupied, not by the letter, but by the following elaborate printed notice:—

"In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

*Number* *Name* *Prison* *County.*

"The following regulations as to communications, by visit or letter, between prisoners and their friends, are notified for the information of their correspondents:—

"The permission to write and receive letters is given to prisoners for the purpose of enabling them to keep up a connection with their respectable friends, and not that they may be kept informed of public events.

"All letters are read by the prison authorities. They must be legibly written and not crossed. Any which are of an objectionable tendency either to or from prisoners, or containing slang, or improper expressions, will be suppressed.

"Prisoners are permitted to receive and write a letter at intervals, which depend on the rules of the stage they attain by industry and good conduct; but matters of special importance to a prisoner may be communicated at any time by letter (prepaid) to the Governor, who will inform the prisoner thereof, if expedient.

"In case of misconduct, the privilege of receiving and writing a letter may be forfeited for a time.

"Money, books, postage stamps, food, tobacco, clothes, etc., should not be sent to prisoners for their use in prison as nothing is allowed to be received at the prison for that purpose.

"Persons attempting to clandestinely communicate with, or to introduce any article to or for, prisoners, are liable to fine and imprisonment, and any prisoner concerned in such practices is liable to be severely punished.

"Prisoners' friends are sometimes applied to by unauthorized persons to send money, etc., to them privately, under the pretence that they apply it for the benefit of the prisoners, and under such fraudulent pretence such persons endeavour to obtain money for themselves. Any letter containing such application received by the friends of a prisoner should be at once forwarded by them to the Governor.

"Prisoners are allowed to receive visits from their friends according to rule, at intervals which depend on their 'stage.'

"When visits are due to prisoners notification will be sent to the friend whom they desire to visit them."

I assume that all these regulations may perchance be necessary. I will even grant that when a prisoner writes for the first time to any ordinary correspondent, it is desirable that they should all be notified. But I know, from my own personal experience, and from what I have been told by other prisoners, that the continual reappearance on every letter of this drearily-worded rigmarole is felt as a gratuitous insult by the friends of the prisoners, for it is a continual reminder to them in a needlessly offensive form of the abject state of degradation and humiliation to which their correspondents are reduced.

A prisoner in the course of a long sentence may write a hundred letters to his nearest relatives, and there can be no possible reason why their feelings should be harrowed and outraged by the needless repetition of these warnings and reminders. Surely one such notice is sufficient. It is not likely to be forgotten. Nor is it so attractive a

specimen of official composition as to merit such wide-spread and frequent circulation. I myself was prevented from writing to members of my own family circle by the dread which they expressed that such a wantonly and brutally offensive circular might perchance fall into the hands of strangers. Surely these instructions might be printed separately on a separate slip of paper, and inserted by the school-master (who examines and closes the letters) in all envelopes addressed to new correspondents. There would be no difficulty about this, for the name and address of every person to whom a prisoner writes is carefully noted, with the date, on the prisoner's letter record. The present practice is nothing but a relic of the evil time now gone, I hope, for ever, when convicts were treated with barbarity and their friends with gratuitous indignity. If this complaint be well founded in the case of ordinary, or what may be called domestic, letters, it is equally applicable to all communications which prisoners are from time to time required to write on official and other business matters. For some years I was frequently receiving official letters. I was allowed to reply to them as a matter of course by the courtesy and good feeling of all the Governors under whom I served. I was not compelled to reply. It was a matter of voluntary good-will on my part, which involved me in the loss of a meal. Now, every time I wrote I had the fact painfully in my mind that every office-boy, every whippersnapper, through whose hands my letter might pass would fasten on these officious and offensive details. Could there be a more glaring instance of the absence of official tact and consideration? It would seem as if a notice like this were circulated thus particularly with the single view of wounding the feelings alike of the prisoners who write the letters and of the friends who received them.

This question of the treatment of prisoners' friends by the authorities is also one of great importance, and deserves more public attention than it has ever yet received. The attitude assumed in all the restrictions we have been considering towards the friends of prisoners, towards their wives, parents, children, and relatives, is both unjust and offensive, obviously and manifestly unjust, and to the last degree brutally and gratuitously offensive. I have read many works on prison life and prison experiences, but they are all so occupied with the sufferings of prisoners that they either altogether ignore or else fail to recognize adequately the moral and often, I fear, physical, sufferings of prisoners' friends, which to my thinking is a much more pathetic subject. That is a side which, with my experience, will never be out of my mind. It is an aspect of the case which is far too often overlooked. I express my deliberate opinion, an opinion which I myself formed in prison, and which is now confirmed by the letters which I receive almost daily from prisoners' friends, that harsh as the treatment of prisoners under the present system continues to be, the treatment of their friends is still more cruel.

When I first went to Portland, prisoners' letters were not even put in envelopes, but were fastened up in the old fashion in which notes were folded before envelopes came into general use. The consequence was that they could be identified as coming from prisoners, and their contents could even be scanned by gossiping postmistresses and inquisitive postmen. Why, this was nothing short of torture. Let my readers picture to themselves the agony of shame and humiliation which the receipt of such a letter would inflict upon some wife or mother who was hiding from the disgrace which the imprisonment of her dear one had inflicted upon her, who felt that disgrace in

every incident of her daily life, who was toiling night and day to preserve among strangers some measure of respectability and of respect; and whose terror-stricken seclusion was interrupted periodically by the receipt of a communication which told all the little world around that its recipient was the relative or friend, or at least a correspondent, of a convict.

Let it be remembered that the friends of prisoners are wholly innocent of any offence against the law. They are deserving of sympathy, not of punishment, and yet they suffer a double load of punishment. To the agony of separation there is added the agony of disgrace and shame. The longed-for letter from the absent dear one brings with it more pain than pleasure, the long-awaited visit more distress than delight.

## CHAPTER XV

### PRISON DIETARY

WHENEVER our penal system is under discussion, the subject of prison diet is the one which most attracts the attention and interest of the English people. Every ex-prisoner who expatiates on his alleged sufferings has always some complaint to make about the food, and is wont to talk of having endured semi-starvation. I may say at once that I have little sympathy with these complaints. They strike me in the main as unreasonable and untrue. This question of prison dietary is much more difficult and complex than may appear at first sight. Prisoners in this case (as in all others) are wont to look at it exclusively from their own particular point of view. This to my thinking is absurd. The taxpayer, who maintains the prisoner, has surely a right to be considered. The ordinary dietary of the unskilled labourer (especially the agricultural labourer) has also to be remembered. It seems to me it would be nothing less than a scandal if a man undergoing imprisonment for an offence against the law should fare better in the way of food than the law-abiding citizen who is doing his utmost to maintain himself and his family. Then there are hygienic considerations which cannot be overlooked. I can but hint at them in a work of this nature. It must not be forgotten

that the segregation of a large number of able-bodied male adults is not conducive to decency, and is, in fact, antagonistic to the natural laws of health. The food to be given to such men must obviously be sufficient to sustain life without stimulating the lower passions and proclivities. One of my greatest complaints against the administration of our prisons is that this all-important consideration is not sufficiently appreciated by the prison authorities in the matter of food, of wholesome outdoor exercise, or of profitable mental occupation.

The objections which I have to urge to the prison dietary apply more to its service and character than its quantity. Let me first state the hours at which meals are served and the weekly bill of fare.

Breakfast at half-past five in the morning, consists for the greak bulk of prisoners of one pint of tea, with eight or ten ounces of bread. Supper at half-past five in the evening of one pint of excellent but very oleaginous cocoa, and eight or ten ounces of bread. Dinners, served at about half-past eleven, in the forenoon, are varied as follows:—

SUNDAY.—Four or five oz. of cold New Zealand frozen meat, one pound of potatoes, eight oz. of brown bread.

MONDAY.—Haricot beans, two oz. of bacon, twelve or sixteen oz. of potatoes, eight oz. of brown bread.

TUESDAY.—Four or five oz. of mutton, potatoes and bread as before.

WEDNESDAY.—Pint of pea soup, potatoes and bread as before.

THURSDAY.—Four or five oz. of beef, potatoes and bread as before.

FRIDAY.—One pint of "vegetable" soup, potatoes and bread as before.

SATURDAY.—Twelve oz. or one lb. of hard, stodgy suet pudding of the kind known to school-boys as "duff," and potatoes and bread as before.

The Sunday breakfasts are served about two hours and the Sunday dinners about three-quarters of an hour later. The Sunday supper hour, on the other hand, is about an hour earlier. From half-past five on Saturday evening to half-past seven on Sunday morning is a long interval without food for most men, especially for men who are eating very sparsely.

The difference in the weight arises from the fact that the prison diet is most unwisely divided into two classes, known respectively as "D" and "E" diets. Speaking generally the first is given to prisoners who work under cover, and the second to those working in the open air. "E" diet also carries with it 2 oz. of cheese on the Wednesdays and Fridays, when soup is the principal dish at dinner, and a minute daily allowance of margarine or butter. This separation of the diet into two classes is a serious mistake, and causes endless grumbling and scheming and jealousy.

The initials "D" and "E" are not easily explicable, but it is generally understood that "D" stands for "deficient" diet and "E" for enough—just enough.

The distinction between indoor and outdoor labour is arbitrary and untenable. Much indoor labour—the shoemakers', for example—is quite as heavy and exhausting as some of the outdoor labour. Then no account is taken of the physical needs of different men. It is an undeniable fact that some men, whatever their age or occupation may be, stand more in need of food than others. A man with a small appetite needs less wherever he may work than a man with a large appetite.

The late Lord Ridley, when Home Secretary, in his warrant appointing the Departmental Committee on Prison Dietaries—of which Dr. Herbert Smalley, the Medical Inspector of Convict Prisons, whom I have often met, was the moving spirit—laid down certain essential principles. Firstly, that the object of prison diet is to secure that the food given to prisoners shall be sufficient, and not more than sufficient, to maintain health and strength. Secondly, that the main object to be kept in view is that the ordinary prison diet is not to be regarded as punitive. Thirdly, that the prison diet ought not to compare too favourably with the diet of free labourers in the outside world or the inmates of workhouses. These three stipulations seem to be barely reconcilable with one another—a dietary which is just sufficient for health and strength and not more than sufficient would certainly be regarded as punitive by most people. As to its not comparing too favourably with the diet of free labourers and inmates of workhouses it is to be remembered that the great majority of the latter are elderly people and that most free labourers smoke and many unfortunately drink.

The casual student of the above-quoted table will probably remark when he has read it, "Well, what can a man want more than that?" and as to mere quantity, that is, in my opinion, a perfectly just remark.

Now, I will speedily point out why that scale of dietary is all wrong. So far as I personally was concerned, it was considerably more than I could eat, and I always had something to give away to fellow-prisoners every day. It was against the rules, of course, but no less a personage than the Right Hon. John Burns stated, I believe in the House of Commons, that when he was at Pentonville he was glad to carry off in his breeches the illicit loaf which

some less hungry fellow-prisoner had given him. I solemnly declare that to a great number of prisoners penal servitude is certainly not starvation or semi-starvation, but one long hunger. More than a year ago there arrived at Parkhurst, on a sentence, I think, of seven years, a metropolitan ex-municipal official whose offences were still fresh in the public mind. In my judgment, from my personal observation, he is, or rather was a few months ago, a remarkable example of the difference in the matter of diet between different men. He was a spare man. I was a stout man, but what was more than enough for me was certainly not enough for him. It is only in prison that one realizes the varying quantities of food required by individuals, and yet, when we look at our own circle of friends, we begin to see something like it in ordinary life. There might be seen at Parkhurst tubs of food which prisoners could not eat. That seems to belie my statement, but these tubs are filled with what the men with small appetites like myself were not able to finish, and the contents of these tubs represent the surplus food of the smaller appetites which, as it is not allowed to be given to the men who could eat the food, is diverted to the piggeries. This is a gross and wicked waste which outrages the moral sense of prisoners and leads to the violation of all the prison rules.

There was a convict at Parkhurst who had been a school-master. He was in the printers' shop with me, and though a man of education, he often made the most piteous appeals to me; in fact, he turned mendicant and literally begged of me to give him even the crusts or waste crumbs of my loaf. He afterwards became an infirmary orderly. Now the reason why the position of "orderly" is so much sought after by even intelligent prisoners, notwithstanding its menial duties, is because the orderlies get opportunities, which other prisoners are without, of

obtaining an occasional extra loaf. I have heard of prisoners who have eaten uncooked offal, and I know of one case where a man who had occupied a prominent position in the commercial world tried to appease his hunger by devouring the marrow which he extracted from the decayed bones which he was employed in crushing for manure.

This bone-crushing is one of the most disagreeable forms of prison work, and it is a loathsome thought that a fellow-creature should be reduced to such a chronic state of hunger that he is reconciled to this unsavoury work by the chance of finding in the putrid bones which he hammers something left—however decayed—that he can consume and apparently enjoy. And let it be remembered that this goes on at a time when tubs of surplus food are daily given to the pigs.

I have already said, I think, that although the diet is ample for a man of small requirements like myself, it is insufficient for general adoption. What is wrong with the diet? it may be asked. I claim that hot, thick pork pea-soup, though excellent in winter, is the wrong food for a man in June, July, August, and September. The very thought of it is repellent in the hot weather. Men who partook of it were listless and oppressed. The general indigestibility of the food is also notorious, and is, I dare say, partly responsible for the complexion peculiar to convicts which has been noticed and commented on by writers on prison management.

Lack of variety is another fault in the dietary. It is admitted by medical men that variety is an essential of good digestion. That is shown by the fact that directly a man gets into such a state that he cannot work, the doctors hurry him off to the infirmary in order that he may be placed upon a more varied dietary.

Saturday's dinner—summer and winter—an 8 oz. loaf,

16 oz. of potatoes, and blocks of solid and absolutely indigestible "duff," which I rarely tasted, is also absolutely unsuitable for anybody who has not the digestion of an ostrich. Moreover, this duff is served on a day when the men have no exercise in the afternoon, and have therefore no chance of working off its ill-effects by active exercise. This duff, in addition to being indigestible, is almost tasteless, and is therefore as unpalatable as it is unwholesome.

I do not know from whom the prison authorities purchase their supplies of meat, but if a decent price is paid—as I understand it is—I am confident that a personal inspection by some good practical man would prove that the nation is grossly imposed upon. It is generally surmised that some interested person makes a remarkably good thing out of the supply of meat. I do not speak with any knowledge, I only repeat what I have heard from at least a dozen officers that there is looseness if not peculation in this department. This unfavourable opinion as to the quality of the meat may be challenged, but in the interests of hundreds of suffering men in His Majesty's prisons I am prepared to stand by my assertion, and to establish it, if necessary. I can do so with the better grace, because, though I served an exceptional term of penal servitude, I never once returned my food or made it the subject of a complaint. I looked upon tough, stringy and fat meat as part of the punishment I had to undergo, and I went through with it as best I could.

It was also part of my punishment to be surrounded all those long years by half-fed men whose talk was always of food. There is something almost horrible in the fact that the man who gets a 10 oz. loaf is regarded with envy as a lucky fellow by those who only get an 8 oz. loaf. There is something pathetic, too, in the fact that the convict, with

a little practice, is able to weigh exactly his loaf in his hand. He can tell within a few grains whether it is up to weight or not. For some months I had charge of the scales which are kept for weighing the rations when a convict desires it, and when I speak of men always hungry I speak of what I know.

Little as I partook of food for all those years, it produced in the course of time a severe and constant form of indigestion, which was aggravated, doubtless, by mental worry. I succeeded in alleviating it somewhat by a strict regimen. I did not eat the cold meat on Sunday, the haricot beans on Monday, the horribly fat mutton on Tuesday, the pea-soup on Wednesday, the tough beef on Thursday, or the duff on Saturday, so that I dined on exactly 12 or 16 oz. of potatoes per diem, plus the daily bread, the bi-weekly 2 oz. of cheese, for I was on "E" diet by the doctor's orders, and the by no means unwholesome dish of vegetable soup on Friday. By that means I was able to mitigate my dyspeptic troubles, but they never left me entirely until I left Parkhurst. It will be noted what important parts potatoes and bread play in the dietary, how much the total weekly weight of food is made up of these articles. At least fifty per cent. of the potatoes is absolutely inedible, and the bread, though well baked, is very coarse and hard of digestion.

I shall be asked what became of the food I dispensed with? I gave the meat to hungry and very grateful prisoners endowed with better appetites and teeth than I; the haricot beans, the pea-soup and duff went to their fitting destination, the pig-trough. The hungry men who thus contribute to the maintenance of the pigs ought surely to be considered to have a prior interest in them.

Now, I submit that all this enforced chopping and changing, all this contrivance by prisoners in order to

adjust their dietary to their wants and their digestions, is extremely undesirable, to use no stronger term. It ought surely to be borne in mind that the dietary is intended for the prisoner, and not the prisoner for the dietary. The cooking of the food, too, leaves much to be desired. There is also need of greater cleanliness in the cooking and in the service—the condition of the utensils in which the food is served is often dirty in the extreme. Changes of diet should be made according to the seasons of the year. Haricot beans, suet pudding, and other indigestible food should either be withdrawn altogether or much more thoroughly cooked. Food which is almost tasteless, like the suet pudding, cannot be really wholesome. There should be more green vegetables. None, indeed, appears in the official dietary; the little that is served is an innovation of the medical officer at Parkhurst, for which all prisoners there owe him a debt of gratitude. The dinners should be served hotter. At present, and especially in winter, they are often more than half cold. The kitchen is a long way from A Hall, and there is no covered communication, and the dinners are generally deposited by the cooks on the floor of A Hall a good quarter of an hour or more before they are served out to the cells. And, finally, there should not be two classes of diet. I am told there is only one at Portland or at Dartmoor. There ought not to be more at Parkhurst.

## CHAPTER XVI

### PRISON LABOUR

A BOOK could be written—many books have been written—on the subject of prison labour. Unfortunately I can only devote a chapter to it. It is one of the most difficult problems that the authorities have to deal with. It is, of course, necessary for his own sake that the convict should be actively employed. It is the only chance of preserving his mental, moral and physical health. It is also desirable in the interests of the community that the labour should be of a remunerative character, so as to lighten the burden of the taxpayer, who has a right to insist that the men whom he maintains, feeds, clothes, instructs and doctors in prison should contribute to the cost of their maintenance. On the other hand, it is not unreasonable that masters and workmen should strongly object to their trades being injured by the unfair competition of prison labour.

In turning over some newspaper files of over thirty years ago I came across a series of very outspoken and reasonable letters detailing the grievances of the mat and brush-making industries. Prison-made mats and brushes were taking the bread out of the mouths of honest and industrious artisans. I believe there has since been an earnest attempt on the part of the prison authorities to avoid such a scandal. But this attempt has, of course,

had the effect of diminishing materially the range of prison labour, and it has also been contemporaneous with the recognition by all experts of the absolute folly and inhumanity of employing prisoners in merely objectless tasks. Work which is undertaken simply for the purpose of making work is the hardest and most cruel labour in the world.

These are the difficulties which face the authorities and with which, to do them bare justice, I believe that they are honestly endeavouring to cope. It would therefore ill become me to dogmatize on this subject, or to disparage a system which I have not had to administer. I may be permitted, however, to point out that, though the difficulties are great, they are not so insuperable as they appear at first sight. There is a *per contra*. What is called officially the "service of the prison" is sufficient to occupy a very substantial number of prisoners. This includes Librarian and Hospital orderlies, Cleaners, Cooks, Bakers, Laundrymen, and Gardeners, for all of whom there is steady and continuous occupation. Then there are Tailors, Shoemakers, Stocking-makers, and menders. The prison buildings require Bricklayers, Painters, Plumbers, Carpenters, Tilers, Glaziers, Locksmiths and Whitewashers, and in addition to these there is always work in the prison yards for a party of asphalters. All this work done within the prison walls must, of course, be entrusted to prisoners, and those who are employed in it are certainly employed profitably. Then, account must be taken of the local conditions and facilities at convict prisons. There is some particular employment or occupation specially adapted to each prison, and which occupies a great number of men. I understand that at Dartmoor the greater part of the convicts are employed in draining and trenching and bringing into cultivatable condition that dreary and

inhospitable tract. At Portland there are the quarries, at Parkhurst the printers' shop. These are supplemented at Portland by the tinsmiths' shop (where the utensils used in the prison are made), and at Parkhurst by the piggeries and market gardens. When allowance has been made for all these branches of industry there will not, I imagine, be a very large surplus body of men unemployed, and if the conditions under which the labour is carried out were improved there would be little or none. The great difficulty, so far as the competition with outside trades and labour is concerned, therefore, would seem to relate more to local than to convict prisons. Still, there is some difficulty undoubtedly in the latter, and to this I shall confine myself as coming more particularly within the range of this volume.

Let me say at once that if convict labour does not pay, it is mainly due to the exceptional conditions under which it is carried on and to the exceptional character of the men who are employed in it. Take the great bulk of "star" prisoners. They are by education, character, and age very ill-adapted for hard manual work of any kind. It is hopeless to expect that a middle-aged or elderly banker, lawyer, doctor or shopkeeper, still less a clergyman or dissenting minister, will under any circumstances make a good bricklayer, plumber, shoemaker, or tailor. If he ever had any manual aptitude he has lost it years ago. Such a man can only be put to the more primitive kinds of tailoring, the mending of torn and dilapidated garments, and even this very elementary work he will do very badly indeed. He is thus an unmitigated burden to the State, and the problem is how he shall cease to be so. I think the difficulty would be largely met by the establishment of a separate "star" convict prison, and by concentrating the work of the printers'

shop in such "star" prison. It should be placed under the direct management and control not of a prison warder intent merely on securing his own promotion and of grinding his own axe, but of an independent manager familiar with all the details of the economical working of a large printer's establishment. He should be the equal in social status and independence of the steward, and, subject only to the over-riding and supreme control of the Governor, he should be allowed a perfectly free hand. It would also be necessary that the conditions and hours of labour should be considerably modified.

When I speak of the conditions of labour, I have especially in mind the countless restrictions and limitations which are imposed by considerations of discipline and of the safe-guarding of prisoners. These conditions and limitations may be absolutely necessary in the case of hardened and habitual criminals; they are manifestly inapplicable or superfluous with first offenders. There are not many sane "stars" likely to make fools of themselves by ridiculous attempts at escape, or whose habits demand that they should be watched as closely as a cat watches a mouse. Morally, the worst thing that can happen to these men is that they should be regarded as lost, and, still worse, that they should regard themselves as lost, to all sense of honour, to all capacity for self-restraint, and to all hope of recovering their self-respect. The existing rules, which are applied indiscriminately (that is the great mistake) to the most dangerous and to the most inoffensive of prisoners, have undoubtedly this baneful tendency. Moreover, they all seriously limit production and curtail the hours of labour.

It will be well to mention here what the hours of actual labour really amount to. In the ten months of the year, from February 1 to October 31, when "full

labour" is going on, the working time of a morning in the printers' shop does not exceed three hours and five minutes, and of an afternoon three hours and forty minutes—that is to say, less altogether than seven hours a day. In other parties it is somewhat less. Now, no printers' shop can be considered to be working full time at that rate. If the eight hours a day, which we are being taught to consider as the natural term of a day's work, were applied to prisons, it would involve not a diminution but a substantial increase of time. This easy-going state of things does not result from any undue tenderness of the authorities for prisoners, but from the exigencies of the officers' meal-times. I should be sorry to be thought to wish to impose longer hours on the officers. I think they are already worked too long. The remedy must be in an increase in the number of officers.

All this would be grappled and dealt with by the independent head of the department. It is quite beyond the capacity or views of an ordinary prison warder, at all events of any mere master-printer warder whom I have ever met. Nor would such independent manager be likely to tolerate the employment of ploughboys as compositors, or of accountants and architects as stokers and firemen. With this change I think there would be no insurmountable difficulty in employing at least three-fourths of the healthy "star" prisoners in the printers' shop. The present establishment is only able, I believe, to deal with a portion of the Home Office printing. Under the new arrangement its capacity would be largely and profitably and justifiably increased.

Of the residue of "star" prisoners, some would find employment in the service of the prison as already described, and the remainder, if unable to work under cover in the printers' shop, could be employed in market-

gardening, an industry for which the soil, climate and local conditions of Parkhurst, at all events, are singularly suitable.

Market-gardening at Parkhurst would not compete with any great local industry, but would, indeed, supply a serious local want. One of the merits of market-gardening is that it is capable of very great—almost unlimited—extension. The demand for market-garden produce is inexhaustible, the supply restricted, the prices obtainable remunerative. Land and labour are the two essential elements. Of the latter there is unhappily an abundance in our prisons, and the former is in hand or attainable without much difficulty.

Beyond these weighty economic considerations, there is the all-important fact that market-gardening is a thoroughly healthful, natural open-air occupation, not too heavy in character, and calculated to improve both mind and body. It was introduced some time ago among the weak-minded at Parkhurst, and has proved a remarkable success. Let it now be extended to all "stars" who are not adapted for the printers' shop or trained to other industrial callings.

There is another field for "star" labour of a much more restricted character and applicable to only a few exceptional prisoners—to professional men, accountants, bank-managers, lawyers and the like, who have no aptitude for the printers' shop and no capacity for open-air work as market-gardeners. These are the men who have the pen of the ready writer, who have, in fact, all their lives worked with their pens. Now there is, as may be imagined, an immense amount of clerical work at all convict prisons, books to be kept, accounts to be made out, returns to be supplied, notices and orders to be issued. It is not work of a particularly confidential character, for

if it were it would not be entrusted to the hands which are engaged upon it. This clerical work is entrusted to a staff of junior Home Office clerks supplemented by some supernumeraries drawn from the better-educated assistant warders. Now this would surely be work upon which the best of the educated "star" convicts could be employed. They could do quite as well as the men who are now engaged upon it, and whose salaries would be saved. The Home Office clerks could return to the Home Office, and the assistant warders would go back to their proper place in the disciplinary ranks, where they are badly wanted and for which they are much better qualified.

I am aware that all kinds of objections can be urged to this proposal, for, if carried out, it would break up a snug little official job. I am sure, however, that the objections can all be met or overruled. The proposal would, in the first place, effect a great economy, and provided the utmost care were taken in the selection of the men—provided they were absolutely separated from the other prisoners, both on week-days and Sundays, at meals and exercise and chapel, provided the hours of business were carefully arranged, there would be little risk of any serious violation of the prison regulations.

The little clerical party should be placed under the control of a competent and wise chief, its members would be encouraged and comforted by perceiving that they were trusted, and finally they should be made to understand once and for all that any lapse from duty, any tricks or trifling, and especially any misuse of pen and ink, would ensure their immediate and final dismissal from the party. Under such conditions, the clerical work at Convict Prisons would be better done than it is now, the men who did it would earn and more than earn the cost of their

maintenance, and some hundreds per annum would be saved to the nation.

I have referred to the restrictions on the amount of prison labour imposed by the disciplinary regulations, and I cannot do better than quote as an illustration a particular instance of which I was an amused eye-witness. It had nothing to do with the printers' shop, but the same system applies to and interferes with all prison labour.

When I was working in B Hall at Parkhurst, as orderly of "28 Party," the cells in the hall were undergoing their annual course of whitewashing, and as the presence of the whitewashers was an unmitigated nuisance and hindrance to our party who were then working on the ground floor, strict orders had been given that this whitewashing should be got over quickly, and the number of whitewashers had, I believe, been increased for that purpose. There were, I should think, ten or twelve of them under the very watchful eye of a very experienced and competent assistant warder. They came in from exercise about the same time as we did at about a quarter-past eight in the morning. Jackets were taken off, white aprons were assumed, planks and steps were placed in position. This was a leisurely proceeding and occupied perhaps a quarter of an hour. Then much activity was displayed, and the unfortunate members of "28 Party" who were seated at work on the floor beneath experienced the full effects of this unwonted energy in the shape of copious showers of whitewash which bespattered their heads, their shoulders, and the garments which they were essaying to sew. All of a sudden, I heard a wheedling voice address the assistant warder:

"Please, sir, this brush of mine's no good; can I have another?"

"We've got none here. You must make that do."

"Please, sir, I can't. The whitewash drops on to the floor before I can get it on the wall."

"Oh, well," exclaimed the warder, "we must get another. Here, all you fellows, knock off, and fall in."

Whereupon, the aprons were cast on one side, the jackets were resumed, and the whole party started off in quest of the needed brush, to the store-room, some hundred yards or more away.

Of course they didn't hurry; it was all in the day's work, and as a cunning idler once said to me, "All in the day's pay too." The men were glad of a change of air, and no doubt the officer in charge was not averse to a stroll.

In about five-and-twenty minutes—twenty-five minutes lost, so far as the labour was concerned—the whitewashers returned. It had taken the whole number of men, with an officer, that amount of time to procure a single whitewash brush. The performance with the jacket and aprons was repeated, and the work, and the sufferings of "28 Party," recommenced.

Now this seems almost incredible, but I am relating what I actually saw. The whitewashers struck work on this particular occasion no less than three times in one morning, so that about an hour and a quarter's work was sacrificed in those fruitless journeys.

There ought, surely, to be some other method of supplying the wants of a party than by compelling all its members to cease their labour every time some want arises. Is it to be wondered at that under such conditions wants are frequent and work is slow?

Again, every working-party, besides being under the charge and direction of one or more officers, is visited at frequent intervals by a principal officer, and also once in the morning and once in the afternoon by the chief

warder, the Deputy-Governor and, generally, the Governor also. Each of these three latter makes separate visits. I confess that this elaborate supervision appears superfluous and certainly does not conduce to industry. The times of these visits is pretty well foreseen, and whatever may have been going on in a party and whatever may be the general conduct of a party, we may be quite sure that it is exemplary while these high functionaries pass by. The effect of all this worrying is inevitably to make the officers in charge of the party and the prisoners who compose the party in league to avoid being caught by surprise; it creates, in fact, a community of interest between the warder and his men. The warder has to trust to the good feeling of the men that they will not get him into trouble by their conduct during these visits, and the men, of course, require as a condition of such good feeling that the officer shall not be too strict with them when the common enemy is out of the way.

It is absolutely impossible for any warder, however alert, to exercise absolute supervision at all times over twenty or thirty men, when engaged in work which spreads over a fairly large area. The strain of watching prisoners is, I know, one of the greatest trials of a warder's life, and in addition to this strain, he knows that while he is watching his men he is always being watched himself by his superiors.

It is a suggestive and startling fact that the result of all the watching of the warders is that it does not pay a warder to be too vigilant. He had better come to a tacit understanding with his party.

I remember hearing from a young and extremely ambitious assistant warder that when he first joined the service, which was some time after I went to Parkhurst, he made up his mind he would never take his eyes off the

prisoners under his charge, and day by day, for ten hours a day, he carried out this resolution. But he found that too much vigilance, too great a desire to prevent escapes, to stop talking, to insist upon industry, brought him into conflict with some of the principals. They clearly disliked this excess of zeal: this young hand was making himself too officious. They would therefore approach from behind with silent and stealthy footsteps and seek to surprise him into some inevitable lapse, due entirely to the fact that instead of maintaining a general supervision he was too intent on watching individuals. As a result, some "old lags" might occasionally manage to get behind him for a moment and exchange a whisper together. Numerous reports were the result.

The young warder speedily found that his zeal actually damaged instead of improving his prospects, and that it was to his advantage to be less strict and to conciliate the prisoners, so as to secure their co-operation in watching his superior officers. To use his own words, "it paid him better to watch the principals than the prisoners." "From that time forward," he added, "I always knew when one of the principals was near. I have never had a report against me since, and, as you see me, I am now well up on the scale of promotion, being an especial favourite of the chief warder and Governor." Prison life thus becomes one long trial of skill between prisoners and subordinate officers on the one hand, and the principals and superior officers on the other.

Nearly every gang or party has a man who is recognized as the warder's "crow," who is stationed as near as possible to the spot where the visitor makes his appearance. It is the crow's duty to warn both the officer in charge and the prisoners of the approach of any superior functionary. I was interested to learn the origin of the word "crow" as it

is thus applied, and found that a crow is the name given by a gang of burglars to the man who stands outside the house, or in some other position, watching for the approach of the police. All prison signs are very silent and unobtrusive. The notice given by the "crow" of the approach of the officers is technically known as "flapping his wings." The warder in charge knows at once, by the silent uplifting of one finger, that the Governor is approaching, two fingers stand for the Deputy-Governor, and three fingers for the chief warder, who is generally and justly the most dreaded of all the prison hierarchy, for he has in his time practised these tricks himself and is therefore alive to them.

It is evident from all this that the difficulties surrounding profitable prison labour are not confined to the character of the work to be undertaken, but are quite as much due to the unbusiness-like conditions under which it is carried on.

## CHAPTER XVII

### INEQUALITY OF SENTENCES

I HAVE often been asked what I consider to be the greatest defect in the administration of the criminal law, and I answer unhesitatingly that it is not to be found in our actual penal system, defective as it is, but in the flagrant inequality of judicial sentences, an inequality which it is hard, I will even say impossible, to reconcile with our habitual notions of the sanctity and righteousness of the administration of justice in this country. In this connection I aver that the people who are best acquainted with the working of the criminal law—the governors and officers of prisons—are the most sceptical as to the boasted merits of English justice. I confess that it was not until I had been myself a prisoner for many months that I became aware of this evil. It came upon me quite as a surprise. My own personal experience of the way criminal trials are conducted had not, I confess, impressed me with a high opinion of the merits of the system, but I had silenced my doubts by the reflection that mine had been an exceptional case, and that judges and juries being after all but human, it was hopeless to expect the stern impartiality of justice when popular passion or prejudices were excited. I, therefore, put myself and my own experiences wholly on one side. It was the glaring anomalies which I met with in other cases that opened my eyes to this evil.

In the tinsmith's shop at Portland I worked for some time between two prisoners, both quiet and respectable men, whose sentences were drawing to a close, and whom I had the happiness to see restored to freedom. On my left hand was a certain P., a respectable, quiet, middle-aged fellow, who was completing a sentence of ten years' penal servitude. I shall have miserably failed in my personal narrative if my readers do not now realize something of what ten years' penal servitude was like in those days and under the system then prevailing. On my right hand was a certain H., a young man of plausible address, well-spoken and fairly well educated. He was completing a sentence of three years' penal servitude. I need not dwell on the difference in severity between terms of ten years and three years. It is as great as the difference between the amputation of a limb and the treatment of a cold. Every sensible man would assume that the offences committed by these men would differ proportionately in gravity. And so they did. But in this grotesque manner—the ten years' man had committed defalcations amounting in all to the sum of £72 (there was no other charge against him), the three years' man had stabbed a girl to death in a brawl in a brothel.

Of course I shall be met with the remark that, glaring as this discrepancy appears to be, everything depends on the particular circumstances of each case. That is true to an extent. I can quite believe from what I knew of H. that there might be much to mitigate and palliate the enormity of his crime. I have no intention to complain in these pages of the inadequacy of sentences—that would be both contrary to my disposition and unbecoming in a man with my experience of penal servitude. I gladly assume that the exigencies of justice were satisfied in H.'s case. But what about poor P. and his ten years?

Can any ordinary circumstances justify a sentence of ten years' penal servitude on a first offender for so paltry a fraud?

I wish I might stop at that question, but I am bound to add that it was universally believed at the time that P. suffered quite as much for his politics as for his peculations. The judge who inflicted this atrocious sentence, and who had a rather evil reputation for severity, had been interested politically in the part of the country where P. lived, having actually represented the county town in Parliament. I regret to say P. had been an active village politician on the other side.

The above is an illustration of inequality of sentences where the offences themselves have differed, the light sentence going to the more serious offence, and the serious sentence to the light offence.

Now I will cite two other instances which also came under my own immediate observation, where the offences were identical in character and differed very little in their circumstances. They were both cases where husbands had killed their wives. I have made it my business since my release to look up the newspaper reports of the inquests and trials, and here again such difference as there was is palpably in favour of the man who got the heavier sentence.

S. shot his wife because she objected to his spending the best part of his time and his money at various local clubs, and took the highly feminine step of following him to those establishments and urging him to return to his home. This was apparently so heinous a proceeding that, when he shot her dead in a fit of temper, the learned and eminent judge who sentenced him dwelt on the abominable nature of the provocation, and inflicted the minimum sentence of three years' penal servitude.

In the other case, another man, K., had shot his wife, as he himself stated, through jealousy, and had then attempted suicide. A very different judge presided over this trial, a judge who was generally reputed a weak man, and who was therefore addicted to strong measures. He passed a sentence of death, which was afterwards commuted to penal servitude for life. I will assume that S.'s anger and K.'s jealousy were alike well founded. Indeed, I regret to say that I have satisfied myself that it was so in K.'s case, and the only plausible suggestion which can account for the discrepancy is that S. had the good fortune to be tried by a strong and merciful judge, and K. the ill luck to be tried by a weak and severe judge. Both K. and S. were at Portland together and afterwards at Parkhurst.

I remember distinctly the talk that went on between prisoners and among officers as to how the discrepancy between the sentences could be accounted for. For some time it was quite a burning question among us, particularly as K. was a quiet, gentle, industrious prisoner who from the first had been popular with everybody in the prison. The opinion of the two men themselves is suggestive and worthy of note. All that K. was ever heard to say was that he couldn't understand why he should be treated so severely and S. so lightly. But S., who was a far more vulgar person, was wont to chuckle aloud over what he called his good luck, and to taunt K. with his bad luck.

I remember a characteristic phrase of S.'s which epitomizes this unworthy attitude: "Why, we both killed our missises. K. fired three shots and got life. I fired five shots and got three years!"

It was not, therefore, the circumstances attending their offences which procured them such a diversity of punishment, but what we often hear of in the sporting Press,

"the chances of the game." But is it right that men should be exposed to such chances? After every allowance has been made for difference of conditions and circumstances and for the vagaries of judicial temperament, ought such discrepancies as the above to be possible? It is a serious fact that while no one doubts the absolute incorruptibility of our judges, or, except in very rare and trying circumstances, their impartiality, their idiosyncrasies of character and temperament are common property among all who frequent their courts.

A keen observer, accustomed to their ways, will be able to predict with almost unfailing accuracy the sentences which judges will inflict on particular kinds of offences. We all know that some judges are famous for their humour, some for their patience, some for their impatience. There are four or five who are consistently severe, and another four or five who are consistently lenient. I have heard prisoners deplore the ill luck which has brought them before old ——, or old ——, or ——, naming three notoriously severe judges. I suggest that it is not impossible to find a remedy for this, and that all parties in the State should combine to wipe away what is a serious blot on our jurisprudence. The judge at the present moment is left entirely to his own devices, provided the sentence that he inflicts does not exceed the limits of the law. He is only subject to public opinion, and it is rather the habit, the honourable habit, of judges to take but little account of public opinion. They are content to satisfy their own consciences, a very high and noble aim. Themselves exponents of the law to others, they are strikingly conscious of the fact that they, and they alone, are a law unto themselves. Hence these perplexing inequalities, which are much to be deplored on many grounds, and particularly because they create in large sections of the

community a cynical scepticism as to the purity of justice in this country.

Respect for national law is at the root of all national well-being. And law will not be respected unless the administration of the law is respected too. How can law be respected which permits such vagaries as I have cited? There is another and withal humorous aspect of this case. Let it never be forgotten that these foibles and peculiarities of the bench are carefully noted, and perfectly understood, by the criminal classes. The chance of appearing before particular judges is discussed by the prisoners, by prisoners' lawyers, and prisoners' friends, and the prisoner will be coached as to how to adapt himself to the circumstances of the hour and to the weaknesses of the legal luminary before whom he appears. I have heard from prisoners themselves how their legal advisers have applied for a postponement of their trials on specious pretexts, so as to prevent their being tried by a judge who was famous (or infamous) for his severity.

Less than a year ago, at Parkhurst, a prisoner told me an amusing story which illustrates what I have just stated. I was busy writing in my cell in the infirmary a few days before my release. The outside of the infirmary was being submitted to the process known as a spring cleaning. One of the outside painters' party was painting the heavy iron bars in front of my cell window mounted on a ladder outside. He was evidently astonished at seeing me in the infirmary, and still more surprised that I was so busy. He made several attempts to attract my notice by coughs and whistles, but in vain.

"Mr. Balfour, Mr. Balfour," he exclaimed at length when his patience was exhausted.

"Well, what's the matter?" I replied.

"What are you up to there, Mr. Balfour? What's all

that writing you are doing? Tell me a good library book."

I told him, and thereupon, as if thankful to have broken the ice, he began a narrative couched in very good but rather formal English. I did not pay much attention. I was accustomed to hearing such accounts. But I was struck by his language. I asked if he were a foreigner.

"No," he replied, "I am a Jew, an English Jew. My friends live in the West of England, and I came to grief there."

"Well, I am surprised," I said, "that a man of your education should be here among the 'old lags.' What brings you here?"

"Gambling and drink," he answered. "I never could bear work."

"The more's the pity," I said. "What did you do?"

"Oh, last time it was a long firm job, but this time" (and he whistled) "it's forgery; £600, and I bagged the lot. I expected I should catch it hot. Everybody told me so. My dear old dad said it would be ten years at least, and that's what I thought too. But I only got five."

"How on earth did you manage that?" I said.

"Oh, it was in this way. I was tried by Justice ——" (mentioning a judge who has left the Bench). "It was at Bristol, and the judge who, as you know, is a hot 'un, had just given a bloke twelve months for assaulting a policeman. Now three months is always considered the usual thing. Of course, the prisoner didn't like it. He told the judge it wasn't playing fair, and he kicked up an awful shine in court. He slanged the judge, the counsel, the witnesses, and, above all, the police. His language was a treat, and he had at last to be forced (yes, so help me), forced out of the dock. The whole court was in excitement, and it had not cooled down when I was called up.

The judge was as red as a turkey-cock. I saw my chance. I bowed respectfully to his lordship. He seemed quite relieved, and looked at me ever so gently. I took heart. I had to plead.

"'Guilty, or not guilty?' I was asked. 'Guilty, I deeply regret to say, my lord,' and I bowed again. Without a moment's hesitation he said, quite considerate like, 'Yours is not a bad case, but I can't give you less than five years.' Now, I've done two of 'em, and I shall be out before the end of next year."

"Well," I said, "if you come back again you ought to be kept here for life."

The eventuality of coming back again had evidently been present to his mind. He said briefly, "Who knows?" He tried next day to renew the conversation. There was one point in which I was interested. "What's become of that £600?" I said. "Oh," he replied, "it went among the gee-gees." I have cited the foregoing case at length, because it is remarkable from the fact that the prisoner got less than he expected, and apparently less also than he thought he deserved.

I had a similar experience of the like kind in the choir of the chapel at Parkhurst, of all places in the world. Some alterations were being made in the seating of the choir, and I took refuge for a single evening's practice among the basses at the back.

I had never spoken to the man next to whom I stood, and I didn't even know his name. I will call him Q. He cordially welcomed me to the deep-toned fraternity. "I knew a friend of yours in Carnarvonshire," he said, naming a well-known local solicitor. "I'm here for £4000, and I only got three years. Think of that!" I did indeed think of that and of poor P. and his ten years for £72.

Then, still further lowering his voice, my neighbour whispered in a tone of exulting satisfaction, "I've got that £4000 still." I was so amused at this incident that I told it to a superior officer, who chuckled with delight. As to myself, I kept away from the basses afterwards, for I never encouraged such confidences.

Let us now tabularize these instances, after the manner of an official report—

| *Name.* | *Crime.* | *Sentence.* |
|---|---|---|
| K. | Killing wife. | Life. |
| S. | ,, | Three years. |
| H. | Killing girl. | Three years. |
| P. | Embezzlement (£72). | Ten years. |
| Q. | ,, (£4000). | Three years. |

What does the reader think of this table?

I have quoted the foregoing sentences by way of contrast, but there are others which equally deserve the epithet of astounding, and which I can only characterize as judicial freaks.

I was for some time brought into daily contact with a middle-aged and apparently respectable man, who was filling a responsible position, and who, I was informed, was an exemplary prisoner. This man was actually undergoing a term of twenty-seven years' penal servitude, made up of a series of sentences which the judge had ordered should run consecutively. I have heard the charge (I think it was blackmailing) upon which this man was convicted, but I know nothing of the facts of the case, and without unduly reflecting upon him I am quite prepared to assume that those facts were of the worst possible kind —but twenty-seven years' penal servitude! Why, it is more than a sentence of imprisonment for life.

This man, if he served all his time, and did not lose a single remission mark, would remain in prison some months

longer than the worst of murderers whose sentence of death had been commuted to penal servitude for life. Since I have been released I have been told that this man's case has been considered by the Home Secretary, and that he has decided that the twenty-seven years should be held as equivalent to a life sentence. But the fact that the Home Secretary had to be called in to mitigate the glaring anomaly of this judicial absurdity serves only to strengthen and give point to these remarks.

There is another anomaly in sentences which never fails to strike the inquirer, whoever he may be, who is striving to fathom the mysterious principle upon which sentences are imposed, or striving, as he well may, to discover if there is any principle at all. The ordinary inquirer would assume that the first sentence imposed upon a prisoner would generally be light, both as to character and duration, but that subsequent sentences would increase in severity as it became evident that the offender was abnormally hardened or practically incorrigible. But this is far from being the case. There are many "old lags" at Portland and Parkhurst to-day who would freely admit, with undisguised complacency, that their first sentence was the heaviest they ever received, and that subsequent sentences, even for precisely similar or worse offences, have been much lighter—that is to say, shorter. This misplaced, this topsy-turvy leniency, suggests that the only rule governing judicial sentences is judicial caprice.

# CHAPTER XVIII

## PRISON OFFENCES AND PUNISHMENTS

It seems at first sight a joke, and a bad joke, to talk about any other punishment in prisons than that which imprisonment itself inflicts.

A convict undergoing a term of penal servitude may well be supposed to be draining the cup of human punishment to its dregs; but, as a matter of fact, this is very far from the case. Penal servitude is not so much a phase, and a bad phase, of life; it is a life in itself—governed by its own special laws, swayed by its own especial interests, and pursuing its own especial aims. It has, like the larger life outside prison walls, its own grades and classes, its good and bad citizens, its law-abiders and its law-breakers. Moreover, it has its own manner of looking at things, its own mode of thought, and, as the reader will have already observed, its own forms of speech.

It exercises a very striking influence not only on its own particular people, on those whom it holds in its clutches, but also on all who, belonging to the outside world, are yet brought officially in contact with it. There is hardly an officer in the Convict Service, from the governors and chaplains down to the most recently appointed assistant warder, who has not caught, who does not reflect, something of the strange, outlandish community in which he labours. Subject to inevitable differences of temperament

and disposition, all these officials have the same distinctive characteristics. They are cautious, wary, reticent, secretive, incredulous men, lacking all enthusiasm and all expansiveness. In their view of life they are pessimists to a man. Nor is this to be wondered at. They see human nature at its worst, and they are, therefore, always instinctively on their guard, and mistrustful of all professions and promises. They never accept a statement implicitly. At the very best they regard it as possibly true.

I once saw a good deal of a chaplain of great experience and length of service who was naturally a blunt, hearty, self-assertive, kindly man, whose disposition would be to blurt out whatever was uppermost in his mind—the sort of man who loves to speak the truth and shame the devil. But the service and the system, its rules, regulations, and standing orders, and the terrible monotony of constant effort and apparently unbroken failure, had told its tale. I think he talked as unreservedly to me as he had ever done to any prisoner, at least he told me so more than once, and he was a man to be believed, but in his brightest moments he never could divest himself of the melancholy of his life. He never joked, he often gibed. It was painful to observe the warfare that was always waged in this good man's breast. The official nature and the natural man were in perpetual conflict, and after more than a quarter of a century of such strife it is not surprising that the official nature had gained the mastery.

I dwell on all this because it is important that my readers should realize thoroughly that the life of a convict —a life regulated by two or three gentlemen in Whitehall —is not to be judged by any of the standards which are applicable to a life of freedom. Seclusion, silence, shame, separation from one's fellows, a minute and pedantic

control exercised by others over all one's actions, a steady, persistent course of official snubbing from morn till eve, these are its normal conditions. The man who is brave enough or philosophical enough to accept them and adapt himself to them, may grow at length so accustomed, so acclimatized to their influence as to pass at least a tolerable existence. But this demands exceptional qualities and a tremendous effort. On the other hand, the eager, the impulsive, the impatient, and the quarrelsome will find themselves continually in collision with their surroundings. Generally these men have come to prison through inability to curb their passions when in freedom, and naturally they are the men who most frequently get into trouble and incur additional punishment when in prison.

I hope I shall not be suspected of anything like intolerance when I mention a fact which would be confirmed by every officer at Parkhurst, that the convicts who are most difficult to manage, the most violent, aggressive, cunning, and ungrateful, are the Jews. The criminal Jew as he is met with in considerable numbers at Parkhurst proves himself indeed to be a descendant of that "stiff-necked generation" whose turbulence and misdeeds occupy so large a portion of Old Testament history. Of course there are exceptions (I knew one in ten years), but they are so rare that they prove the rule very conclusively. I ought to add, as a matter of justice, that this is in no wise attributable to neglect on the part of the Jewish Pastor or Rabbi, who is most zealous and exemplary in his ministrations, or to the excellent local Jewish Organization which looks after the necessities and material interests of Jewish prisoners. The fact I have mentioned is all the more disappointing having regard to the excellent religious and social agencies which are devoted to the service of Jewish convicts.

I have been frequently asked about corporal punishment

in prisons, and I observe that the Humanitarian League includes the abolition of corporal punishment in prisons among its special objects. I sympathize to the full with the general aim of the League, and, if it had been in existence and known to me before I went to prison, I should probably have been one of its most zealous members. But an experience of over ten years has convinced me that it would be inexpedient and unsafe to abolish corporal punishment in prisons altogether; indeed, I am bound to add that I should now be rather in favour of extending it to certain other aggravated offences. At the present time corporal punishment is practically reserved for two offences: violent and unprovoked assaults on prison officials, and incitements to mutiny. I never knew a single serious instance of the latter offence. It is practically non-existent among "stars." It may sometimes occur among habitual offenders. Incitements to mutiny imply the existence of a good deal of mutual confidence and co-operation between the inciters and the incited, but just as it has been said that there never was an Irish conspiracy of three without one of the conspirators being a traitor, so I am sure that, except under very special circumstances, no three "old lags" would dare to trust one another in so serious and hopeless an enterprise. I am not maligning them by saying that the love of freedom is so strong a passion of the human heart that it would be difficult to find a man among them who would not betray his own familiar friend for the chance of a single year's remission of sentence. I put aside, therefore, incitements to mutiny.

It is a very different matter when we come to violent and unprovoked assaults upon warders. I am sorry to say that they are common enough, in fact they are of frequent occurrence. There were dozens in my time, at Parkhurst,

and some of them of such severity as to incapacitate their victims for further service. I do not wish to exaggerate, but it may be truly said that many warders, who are in charge of certain of the parties, where the most lawless and violent prisoners are found, take their lives in their hands every time they go on duty. These brave and excellent public servants deserve all the protection that the State can grant them, and human nature (especially the class of human nature in question) being what it is, I know of no deterrent more effectual than corporal punishment. I should be truly thankful if its opponents would suggest a better. I have said that I would extend it to some other serious offences. I fail to see why violent and unprovoked assaults on prisoners should not be dealt with in the same way. Anxious as I am to defend the warder, it seems to me that the prisoner is entitled to an equal protection. He is placed in a party and kept in it, not from his own choice, but by the authority of the Governor or the good pleasure of the chief warder, and although he has not many rights left to him, he certainly has not lost the right to be protected from violence and outrage. If flogging, or rather the liability to be flogged, does restrain violent prisoners from assaulting warders, I can see no reason why violent prisoners should not be restrained in a like manner for assaulting their fellow-prisoners. The same reasoning seems to me to apply to other serious offences against decency and order.

In short, without corporal punishment, having regard to the fact that the offender you are dealing with is already a prisoner and undergoing a sentence of penal servitude, I fail to see what other mode of punishment which will act as a deterrent remains to the authorities. There is nothing more astounding than the absolute impotency of the authorities to punish adequately grave

violations of the law committed by prisoners in prison. The punishment of minor offences, of mere breaches of prison discipline such as talking and carelessness, is generally excessive, often cruel and sometimes vindictive, but for undoubted crimes, such, for instance, as arson and attempts at arson, a convict prison appears to be the only place in the King's dominions where they can be committed with impunity. The scale of prison dietary is so meagre, and the physical condition of prisoners is consequently so low, that no medical officer could be found to sanction the infliction of any term of bread and water for more than three consecutive days at a time. It is absurd to consider the deprivation of books an adequate punishment for men who rarely read. Detention in a cell and consequent deprivation of exercise is not a hardship, but a help to a man who is on a diet of bread and water, and loss of remission marks does not affect a man whose misconduct may have already forfeited all remission. The fact that in such cases the authorities have corporal punishment in reserve, to be used in the last resort, seems to me to be the only one of all the "resources of civilization" which remains unexhausted. Violent assaults upon prisoners by prisoners are, it is true, much less frequent than similar assaults upon officers, but they are far from being unknown.

I myself was once threatened by a fellow-prisoner, and though in this case no punishment could have been administered properly, for the man was mad, still it may be related here as showing the risks which an orderly prisoner runs when placed among violent and reckless men.

My next-door neighbour was apparently a quiet, inoffensive man, D—— by name, a man whom we all were glad to tolerate and to help, for he had the reputation

of being what is known as "balmy' (weak-minded). He was a "lifer," and he and I were very fair friends. One day, as we were falling in on the landing to receive our work (for this occurred years ago when the party to which I then belonged worked in their cells, or rather at their cell doors), D——, who in the course of his duties was entrusted with sufficiently dangerous tools, such as a knife and a big pair of scissors, informed another prisoner that he intended to "stick" me with the knife or scissors the first time he had the chance, and that he hoped to do so that very day. The man to whom he confided this kindly design was naturally alarmed, and hastened to apprise the officer in charge of the party, and to warn me also at the earliest opportunity. I do not profess to be particularly brave, but I can honestly say that, though I thought the threat might very probably be carried out, I was not seriously alarmed. At that time, in my then state of health, and with the long years that rose before me like a blank, dismal wall, shutting out from my eyes home and dear ones and liberty, I confess that I should have been rather grateful to the man who would thus have put an end to all my troubles. It was this absolute indifference to anything, however serious, that any prisoner could do to me, and not personal courage which enabled me through all my prison life to face with calmness many a bullying ruffian whom I should certainly have feared to meet, whom I should probably now again fear to meet, in freedom.

The warder in charge, an excellent and conscientious officer, known universally and affectionately as "Jimmy," who has long since retired on a well-earned pension, took quite a different view of the matter. He promptly reported it to the principal warder in charge of the hall, a certain —— who had the malign reputation of being the

worst and most vindictive principal in the convict service. This man was endowed with a positively diabolical ingenuity for the discovery—many people affirmed the invention—of offences among prisoners and officers alike. He was in a haughty mood that morning, and treated the matter as of no importance, and in his own peculiar and especially disagreeable manner snubbed Warder Jimmy. This was rather more than flesh and blood could bear.

I therefore took the earliest opportunity of interviewing my would-be assassin. "I say, D——," I said, "is it true you are going to do for me?" "Yes," he calmly replied. "I will put this knife into you the first good chance I get." "But why?" I remonstrated. "I thought I was one of your best friends. What harm have I ever done you?" "Whoever said you'd done me harm? I shouldn't want to put you out of the way if I didn't like you." "All right," I replied. "I understand now. I'm glad we're good friends."

As soon as —— reappeared on the landing I asked leave to speak to him, and that privilege being graciously conceded to me, I inquired if he was aware of D——'s kindly intentions. "Oh yes, I have heard something about it. But what's it to do with you?" "Do with me!" I answered in amazement. "Oh, nothing. I am speaking to you about it because it seems to me that it may have something to do with you. Yours would be the responsibility if anything of this sort should happen after this. A coroner's jury might possibly consider it manslaughter, and in that case—who knows?—why, you might be here in another capacity." He turned on his heels, with something as nearly resembling a grunt as I ever heard proceed from human lips, but in less than ten minutes the Governor had been apprised of D——'s intentions. He was very quietly asked to step over to the

infirmary, as the doctor wanted to speak to him. I at once lost him as a neighbour, and I did not see him for several years, until one morning I found myself as librarian orderly exchanging his library book. He was enjoying life among the "balmies" (weak-minded prisoners). We nodded and smiled. Of course, he had forgotten all about his intentions towards me. Of course, I had not.

I mention this case because, as I have just said, it throws a light on one aspect of prison life. Of course, it would never have been a case for the infliction of corporal punishment. The man was mad, and ought never to have been allowed to mix among prisoners nor to have access to dangerous tools, but it shows that orderly and decently conducted prisoners are liable to violence from the men among whom they are thrown. Threats of the kind have frequently been addressed to me, but as I have always treated them jauntily and as a matter of utter indifference, I escaped scot free. More aggressive or more timid prisoners would probably have fared worse, but the fact remains that if corporal punishment is deemed to be a deterrent against unprovoked and violent assaults upon warders, prisoners are as equally entitled to the same protection.

In addition to serious assaults by prisoners on prisoners, there is always a good deal of fighting going on among them. It is one of the most common of offences and is treated with a wisdom which I wish were shown in dealing with other offences. When a fight occurs, the combatants are almost invariably allowed the privilege of a round or two before they are separated, the result being that one or sometimes both of them, will display visible marks of the encounter for days. Then the officers interfere, and the pugilists, being parted, are escorted to the "separate" (or punishment) cells, whence in due course they will be

taken and charged before the Governor. I have spoken of "a round or two" as being permitted. This does not seem a very serious matter, nor is it, but I have known a big bully so mauled by a little fellow half his size that he has had to be taken to the hospital. Of course, in the greater number of cases very little damage is done, and I repeat that it is a wise thing to let these quarrelsome fellows indulge their natural pugnacity, which, by the way, imprisonment seems curiously to aggravate. The punishment for an offence of this sort would be one, two, or three days' close confinement, bread and water diet, loss of stage and also loss of a certain number of remission marks.

As I have said, I have known many cases of violence and unprovoked assaults upon officers. All sort of weapons have been used, and in some cases no conceivable reason could be assigned for the offence. It has seemed to have proceeded from absolutely wanton wickedness. I myself witnessed one gross assault upon an officer. A member of the cleaners' party attacked the officer in charge. The culprit was an old offender, a sturdy, well-educated young Jew, far better educated, indeed, than the great majority of prisoners, and the officer was a very quiet and amiable man. To put it plainly, the prisoner was much the better man of the two with his fists, and the officer did not give a very conspicuous display of courage, for, as a matter of fact, he turned tail and ran, the prisoner running after him. I was working on the lower landing and with one or two other "stars" hastened to the officer's relief, but before we could be of any service other assistance had arrived.

The prisoner was charged with the offence before the committee of Visiting Magistrates, who have the power to hear evidence on both sides on oath, and was sentenced to a certain number of lashes. I don't think the punishment was very severe. The offence was grave.

Let me add that, so far as my observation and inquiries go, it is the anticipation and surroundings of the punishment rather than the punishment itself which terrify. I will not attempt to describe the details. The Governor, doctor and chief warder are always present. Care is taken that no prisoner shall see, or, if possible, even hear, anything that is going on. I imagine that this precaution is a wise one. The secrecy attending the infliction of the flogging is probably more impressive than the actual flogging. The doctor has the right, which I believe he often exercises, of stopping the flogging at any moment, when in his opinion it appears to be too severe for the prisoner.

As I have just remarked, it is the surroundings and anticipation of the punishment rather than the punishment itself which terrify. God forbid that I should make light of the mental agony which any man must suffer who is doomed to undergo this distressing experience. However hardened, however depraved, however brutal such a man may be, his mind must inevitably dwell on the ordeal which is before him. He is certain to be a man in good physical health and condition, and he will be sure to contrast instinctively his present vigorous physical personality with the bleeding and lacerated creature that will stagger from the triangle when the sentence had been carried out.

The punishment of the lash is inflicted in a few moments, but in those few moments are concentrated the emotions, the sufferings and the fiendish passions of a lifetime. The sufferer's heart for a time must be a hell.

I am not seeking to evoke sympathy for the prisoner. My sympathies are all with the man he assailed, and who, in his turn, may fairly be credited with equally distressing, though different reflections; but truth demands that this

feature, this aspect, of corporal punishment should not be ignored. Nor are its effects confined to the offender. As already stated, the governors always witness these harrowing spectacles, and, with all respect to these high officials, I may say that it has struck me that they do not altogether escape unscathed from the experience. Speaking generally, they are a humane and kindly body of men, but they are human, very human, and as such their characters are naturally affected by the gruesome experiences of their daily life. I do not think it would be unfair to attribute a certain insensibility to physical suffering, which I fear may be detected among the best of them, to their enforced familiarity with the infliction of corporal punishment. And of course the same remark applies to all the other officials (and most noticeably to the chief warders), whose duty calls them to this disagreeable experience. Nor does it stop here. I have said that every care is taken that prisoners should neither witness nor hear anything of what goes on, but such care counts for little. I, who was for years working in an "indoor party" (that is to say, a party employed in one of the halls), can testify to the fact that whenever corporal punishment was being inflicted, the fact was known to every one around me, and a kind of awe-stricken silence and stupor pervaded the whole company. Men who usually chattered lightly were silent, or spoke in monosyllables. Every one was gloomy and restless. It seemed as if a kind of moral pall had been cast over all of us. When any officer who might be supposed to have something to do with the business happened to hurry through the hall, the eyes of every prisoner followed him, all ears were strained to catch the slightest sound. The moral tension was terrible. If my own sensations may at all be taken as a sample of the feelings of my fellow-prisoners, then I can affirm that at

such times a feeling of nausea overpowered all others, with the result that many a dinner would that day be left untasted. I make no reflections on these experiences. I leave that to others. I am content to state the facts.

But, as I have already said, I confess I am not so much concerned about the prisoner as I am about the punishment. Did it effect its purpose? Now, in the case I have just mentioned, it certainly did act as a deterrent, for this prisoner, an especially quarrelsome and cantankerous fellow, was careful never again to commit himself. He has been suspected, and I believe with justice, of inciting another prisoner to assault the same officer. He has been repeatedly and properly punished for other offences. He has himself threatened violence, but, thanks, as I believe, to the flogging, he has never again resorted to violence, thus proving that with him corporal punishment, and corporal punishment alone, would act as a deterrent. This is a man, as I have said, of very good education, and of considerable natural ability, but unscrupulous, mendacious, and lawless to the last degree.

I recall another and more recent case, where, if I remember the facts aright, the same officer, without giving any provocation or receiving any warning, was greeted on opening a prisoner's door in the morning with a violent blow on the head from the stool, which is part of the furniture of every cell. In this case, the offender was reputed to be a decent, well-educated man, and he has never himself attempted to explain what prompted him to commit such an offence. It is suspected that he was incited—"egged on"—to it by the man whom I have just mentioned. It was rumoured that there was some hesitation on the part of the Home Office in confirming the sentence of corporal punishment in this case. The sentence, before being carried out, is always first submitted

to the Home Secretary for confirmation. Let it be remembered that no Governor has the power now to inflict corporal punishment of his own right. The responsibility rests exclusively with the Visiting Magistrates, and while their sentence may not be increased by the Home Secretary, it may be, and often is, reduced, or even set aside altogether. Now, with these facts in view, I think I may fairly appeal to the Humanitarian League to show as much humanity towards prison officials and well-conducted prisoners as they are honourably anxious to show towards violent and dangerous offenders. If the backs of the latter are to be protected, surely the lives and limbs of the former deserve protection also, and before condemning and abolishing corporal punishment, we have a right to ask what equally deterrent punishment they would substitute for it. Let them only show us that, and my one difference with the Humanitarian League will be at an end.

There is another and, to my thinking, more degrading form of corporal punishment which is sometimes resorted to. I have had several men pointed out to me who have been birched. I imagine that in these cases the personal humiliation is by far the worst part of the punishment, and in so far as its main effect is to degrade, it is open to serious objection. I fear I may be considered callous and cold-hearted in the views that I am expressing, but I must repeat that nothing struck me more forcibly in prison than the utter inadequacy of extra prison punishments, and the impotence of prison authorities to maintain, not the ideal perfection of the standing orders—that is absurd—but the more elementary and decent proprieties of civilized life. The passions of many of the habitual *offenders* are ungovernable in their ferocity. Nothing but *physical* suffering seems to deter them. They are hindered

by no sense of shame. They are restrained by no sense of gratitude. When their passions are aroused, and that occurs easily with many of them, they are more like wild beasts than human beings; the language which they utter surpasses all conception and beggars all description.

A man who has had my experience of contested Parliamentary elections will be fairly familiar with the admitted wealth in profane expletives of the English language, but I never in my life imagined that human lips could utter such horrible blasphemy and obscenity as I was doomed to listen to almost daily during many years of my life in a convict prison. The "star" prisoners at Parkhurst are located in the Hall—B Hall—which also contains the separate, or punishment, cells, and they, the "star" prisoners, have in consequence the frequent privilege of being kept awake the best part of the night, and of being distracted during the brief hours of leisure after labour, by the filthy shouts and cries of men under punishment or expecting punishment, who seem to take a delight in thus setting at defiance every law, human and divine. This is a very curious and remarkable compliance with the standing order which provides that every first offender—"star"—shall be strictly separated from habitual offenders. The strict separation appears to consist in putting the "star" in a place where he is compelled to hear the very worst language, and to be familiarized with the very worst conduct, of the very worst of the habitual offenders.

It is comparatively easy for me now, in the retirement of my own home, to point out this anomaly, but in the interests of common decency, I implore the authorities to alter this abominable arrangement, this callous disregard of their own professed intentions.

I have known men who have kept B Hall awake all night, who have never left off singing, shouting, raving,

cursing, and indulging in the most ribald and opprobrious language. When their conduct became too outrageous, and the patience of the unhappy night patrol (I won't say anything of the unhappy "stars") was altogether exhausted, the wretched creature who thus profaned his manhood and abused the gift of speech would be forcibly deported to a very remote portion of the Hall, a kind of annexe, where the walls and doors are thicker, but even then, fainter, but still audible profanities and obscenities would float upon the midnight air. As I have listened at times to these unchecked orgies of blasphemy and filth, I have asked myself what has become of the boasted resources of civilization? It is all very well to talk of punishing such abominations, but is it not possible to stop them? Cannot science devise some painless gag? That seems the first and most obvious remedy. A man will soon cease to shout if he knows it will lead to his being gagged. Failing this, I know of only two other courses, and those are two forms of corporal punishment—one, the flogging which I have already described, or, still better, the form in which it would be administered if two or three of the unhappy "stars" who had been kept awake all the night were allowed five minutes' interview with the offender in his own cell. He would then experience corporal punishment in its most effective and least degrading form, he would get what he so well deserves—a thorough good hiding—and I feel confident that he would think twice before he offended again.

I dwell upon this subject of bad language and disorderly conduct by prisoners under or awaiting punishment because, as I have already stated, it is the unfortunate "star" prisoners (who certainly do not themselves transgress in this respect) who most suffer from it. I need not comment upon the truly cynical irony of putting men who

are supposed to be especially guarded from the corrupting influences of the habitual criminal in such a location that they are brought within earshot, almost within touch, of the very worst of the habitual criminals.

When referring to the inconsistency of putting "stars" in such close proximity to refractory habitual criminals, I am reminded of another and still more glaring example of similar administrative fatuity on the part of higher Parkhurst officials. Some time ago we had at Parkhurst a number of youthful convicts whom the Home Office in their queer official jargon designated "juvenile adults." The most tender and affecting interest was professed by Whitehall for these somewhat unwholesome youths, who were most of them paying the penalty for one particular offence. In addition to hearing a weekly lecture from the able and devoted Scripture-reader, a privilege I should myself have greatly prized, they were ordered to be kept as much as possible apart, not only from the habitual offenders, as is the case of all "stars," but from all the other "star" prisoners as well. This was, I think, a most mistaken idea. It shut the boys off from many good influences, and herding them all up together had the tendency to foster and encourage thought and conversation exclusively on one particular topic, the topic that it would have been best for them all to forget. Be that as it may, these lads, who were thus to be kept together and separated even from their fellow "stars," were located in the range of cells immediately above the separate punishment cells occupied by the blasphemous habitual offenders to whom I have been referring.

Every secret communication, every profane oath, every obscene and disgusting expression, every glorification of vice and lawlessness, every incitement to crime and immorality in which these ruffians indulged (and their lips

were seldom closed) could be distinctly heard by the striplings whom the Home Office wished so anxiously to remove from all corrupting influences. This is how a crafty and obstructive chief warder appreciates and gives effect to the benevolent reforms of Whitehall. Is it to be wondered at that most of such reforms, when carried out in such a spirit, prove dismal failures, and that the opinion prevalent among warders is that such reforms are meant to fail, that they are, in fact, mere paper reforms, reluctant concessions to public opinion, half-hearted compliances with Parliamentary promises? I am thankful to add that the boys were ultimately sent, I believe, to Dartmoor, where it is to be hoped they are better—they could not be worse—looked after.

I have not minced my words in describing—or, rather, attempting to describe—the conduct of refractory prisoners. No one who has not heard the language and seen the behaviour of these men, could believe that it was possible for any human being to behave as they do. I have known of men in my own experience who have poured out continuously an uninterrupted flood of the most profane and filthy language for a couple of successive days and nights. No person was safe from their ribaldry. They would assail by name the Governor, the chief warder, the medical officer, the warders, with their wives and children. There was no suggestion, however vile, they would not make, and no imputation or threat in which they would not indulge. Now again I would ask the Humanitarian League, none of whom, I imagine, have passed through this experience, what they would do—how they would deal with such cases? I ask this in no controversial spirit, and certainly from no desire to screen or excuse official shortcomings. I ask it honestly for instruction, and I shall be most truly thankful for all the enlightenment

they can give me. I am as anxious as they are for prison reform; and I am truly sorry to differ from them on so vital a detail.

Let it be remembered that the "refractories" to whom I am referring are some of them men who have undergone several sentences of penal servitude. They have been fed, clothed, petted, prayed over, prayed at, preached to, doctored, nursed, coddled, for many years at the public expense, and the result is what I have described. They are a disgrace to mankind and a terror to their fellow-men. I hate the notion of corporal punishment; but there are worse evils in the world—vice and violence, when pampered and unrestrained, are a far more revolting, a far more pernicious, spectacle.

So much, then, for serious offences and their punishment. We have seen that sentences of corporal punishment can only be imposed by the Visiting Magistrates, and practically for only two offences, and that when imposed they can only be carried out with the direct approval of the Home Secretary. The Directors of convict prisons are supposed to make regular periodical visits, and they, too, can inflict special punishment for certain exceptional offences. So far as I have heard, the regularity of these visits leaves a good deal to be desired. In this respect they appear to resemble certain troublesome Spanish verbs, which grammarians classify as "regularly irregular." Then there is the great volume of minor offences, which the Governor deals with daily as they occur, and in respect of which he has the power to inflict certain limited punishments, such as a few days' bread and water, confinement in punishment cells, temporary loss of "stage," and reduction to a lower "stage," and loss of remission marks.

But, as I have pointed out, while the punishment for many outrageous offences is quite inadequate, the punish-

ment which may be imposed for more venial and trivial offences is often beyond measure excessive.

From what I know of the present and the two preceding Governors at Parkhurst (who, differing much from one another in their method of carrying out these difficult judicial duties, have all been conspicuously distinguished by their mercy and forbearance) I am sure that they must often have found themselves hampered by this defect. They either must impose a sentence which they felt to be excessive, or were forced to pass over an offence which ought not to be overlooked altogether. It seems an easy thing for gentlemen at Whitehall who compile elaborate standing orders to toss about such phrases as "Loss of Stage," "Loss of Remission Marks," and the like. It is almost as easy to write such phrases as to read them, but I make bold to doubt whether those who write or those who read quite realize what these things mean.

"Loss of Stage" means something very serious indeed to the prisoner and his friends. To the prisoner it means, among several other things, the deprivation and delay of his correspondence with his friends, and it means to the friends an increased and unexpected measure of anxiety and distress. "Loss of Remission Marks" entails the infliction of a certain number of additional days of penal servitude. To deprive a man of his opportunities of writing to his wife, his children, or his parents, for some small infraction of a minute and pedantic code, or to inflict six extra days of penal servitude (which is the equivalent for a loss of forty-eight remission marks) for some trivial neglect, or some transient ebullition of temper, is, as all will agree, not a light but a very severe punishment. Now I fancy I hear some ingenuous reader exclaim, "Can such monstrous cases ever occur?" Indeed they can. They are occurring every day. Here are two examples out

of many I have known. They are by no means the worst, but from personal causes I remember them most distinctly

The best man I ever knew in prison had once the misfortune to slip as he was carrying a tray of empty dinner-tins down an iron staircase, with the result that two or three tins were upset with a good deal of clatter. The principal warder in charge of the hall happened, I suppose, to be in a bad humour that afternoon (that, of course, occurs sometimes), and angrily exclaimed, "Report that man!" and reported he was. Exposed to the degradation and humiliation (all, by the way, quite unnecessary) which a report involves, deprived of his boots, and shuffling along in a badly-fitting pair of list slippers, escorted by a couple of warders with drawn truncheons, he appeared before the Governor. The charge was stated, my friend acknowledged, explained, and apologized for his mishap. No one could do so better or more convincingly. His conduct and character were unexceptionable, and, of course, the Governor, a just man, as I have stated, was about good-humouredly to dismiss the charge as ridiculous. But this did not suit the chief warder, who is always present at these adjudications as a sort of additional Crown Prosecutor, and who is never slow to humiliate a well-conducted "star." "There have been recently many such mishaps in the hall," he sneered, and fawned. "Oh, in that case," said the Governor, who was not only a just but a weak man, "I am afraid you must lose a month's stage."

So this excellent and orderly prisoner was for this trifling accident deprived for the space of a whole month of all the privileges which he had earned by years of meritorious and industrious conduct. Inferior diet, loss of Sunday exercise, and stoppage of letters to and from his parents, these were the penalties he incurred for being

so unlucky as to slip quite accidentally down a couple of greasy iron stairs when carrying an unwieldy tray of empty dinner-tins! If the Governor were weak in this case what shall we say of the chief warder and his intervention? There was no weakness there. Not only was his assertion untrue in fact, but even if by accident it had been true, it could not possibly be within his knowledge. The chief warder had not been in that hall at that time for months.

An elderly prisoner who was in the habit of walking on the Sundays with this poor fellow felt so indignant at his friend's treatment that he resolved to share that punishment so far as he could, and himself voluntarily abstained for the entire month from the much-prized Sunday exercise. When things like this happen to sorely-tried and well-meaning men, can we wonder that they don't forget to relate them when they regain their liberty? It may seem vindictive, but it is really the long-restrained expression of righteous indignation. That is a case of "loss of stage." But I ought in fairness to add that I am sure the present Governor at Parkhurst would not for a moment tolerate such an intervention, nor would any chief warder dare to attempt it with him.

Now, take a case of "loss of marks." Only a few Sundays after my release I was talking near to my home to a very decent man whom I knew and respected years before at Portland—the "P." whom I referred to in Chapter XVII. "Were you ever run in?" I said. "Oh yes," he answered. "The Governor once gave me three days' bread and water, with a loss of forty-eight marks, for telling a man what library book to apply for." Remember, as I have just pointed out, the loss of forty-eight marks is tantamount to six days' additional penal servitude. Three days' bread and water, and six days' penal servitude for such a crime! Is comment necessary?

The best way to afford to Governors suitable means for the punishment of small offences is to increase the number of minor privileges, which privileges could be temporarily withdrawn when the occasion or necessity for punishment arose. If, for example, a certain moderate amount of talking exercises were permitted, all talking at improper times or in an improper manner could be visited by the stoppage of the privilege for one, two, or three weeks, as the circumstances of the case might warrant. This in itself would be not only an adequate but an appropriate punishment for all misconduct of a trivial nature, and the same principle might be applied to other minor privileges and offences.

I purposely refrain from referring at length in this chapter to attempts at escape and to the punishment awarded for them. They are such serious offences, and withal so wickedly foolish, that I cannot honestly say one word in deprecation of the action of the authorities. A man who thus offends incurs a term of separate confinement in the punishment cells. He is generally deprived of six months of the remission which he may have earned by previous good conduct, which practically amounts to a prolongation for six months of penal servitude. Finally, he is condemned to wear a fantastic harlequin garb. The costume provided is of bright yellow and brown, one arm yellow, one arm brown, one leg yellow, one leg brown, and so on throughout. He looks as though he had escaped from a French pantomime. But he has one great consolation. Though he may be pitied or despised as a fool by sensible prisoners, he is heartily admired, not to say revered, by all the old lags.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE TREATMENT OF FOREIGN PRISONERS

In this chapter I propose to deal with what I believe to be the very worst feature in the actual working of the convict system. I desire to speak about it with all sobriety and seriousness, for I fain would attract not only the reader's attention, but would arouse in him the same feelings of shame and horror that I myself entertain. I can treat the subject dispassionately and disinterestedly, for it neither affects me individually nor does it concern the great body of prisoners, whether they be "stars" or habitual offenders. It relates to a mere handful of unhappy men whose treatment and sufferings under penal servitude have impressed me more painfully than anything which I have myself endured—the "dry bath" not excepted—or than any other evil or abuse which came under my observation.

I say advisedly at the outset that I regard it as nothing less than a disgrace to our national good fame. I allude to the cruel neglect and indifference shown to foreign convicts, and especially to those of Italian and Spanish birth. I particularize the Italians and Spanish, because though the treatment of German, French, and Scandinavian convicts leaves much to be desired, the latter nationalities, though foreign, are more in touch with our own.

Will it be believed that, notwithstanding the large

amounts spent upon our convict prisons, we are unable, as a nation, to provide a school-master, a chief warder, or indeed a subordinate officer of any kind who is capable of speaking to these unfortunate strangers within our gates in their own languages, or of listening intelligently to their natural and necessary inquiries and requests?

While there is at Portland a most excellent collection of Spanish and Italian books, the supply at Parkhurst is so limited that a well-educated man could read them all through without difficulty in a few weeks. And even for the majority of Italian books the nation is indebted to the oft repeated generosity of the Roman Catholic chaplain, whose kindness and zeal reproduce the noblest traditions of the Roman Catholic priesthood.

What can be expected to happen to men who are doomed for a long term of years to spend between fifteen and sixteen hours out of every twenty-four shut up alone within the four corners of their cells, without society or work, or occupation or literature, ignorant of all that is passing in the world, in their country, or in their families? To men as isolated and lonely as if they were stranded on a desert island, and who are without the freedom of movement, the variety of occupation, the chances of rescue which will engross the energies of the marooned or the castaway—what, I ask, can be the result? What else but depravity, degradation, insanity, and death?

If men of education, who enjoy the inestimable blessings of access to much of the best literature in our language, who are engaged in regular daily work, who are able to exchange a furtive but kindly word of sympathy with their fellow-prisoners, who write and receive periodical letters, who are cheered by periodical visits, who pick up and piece together scraps of information which penetrate the prison walls—if such men in spite of all this find the monotony

of prison life almost unendurable, what must be the feelings and the condition of the unhappy foreigners who are destitute of every one of these alleviations and reliefs?

I prefer to put this in the first instance as a general proposition, that my readers may grasp the case in its widest bearings. Let any man of intelligence think out, as he reads this book, quietly and calmly—let him try to think out how he could endure such an experience. It beggars every attempt at realization. The condition of the Italian and Spanish convicts in an English convict prison is that of men who are undergoing the severest form of penal servitude, unrelieved by any of the palliatives which humanity and experience have prescribed as necessary to mental and physical well-being. A man so situated must inevitably degenerate in a few years into something little better than a wild beast. Now this seems strong language, but I am not speaking without my book. All that I have just suggested as likely to occur I have myself seen happen, and it was what I then saw which aroused my attention to this evil, and created in me a determination to expose it.

To the man who is familiar with the weaker and darker sides of our penal administration, the carefully-worded paragraphs, the coldness, the self-complacency, the endless statistics of the Annual Reports of the Directors of Convict Prisons, can create no other feeling than impatience and disgust; the most vigilant and acute of critics will search in vain in these elaborately compiled official documents for a trace of the evil which I am now denouncing. The reports of the Directors are backed or bolstered up by sub-reports from inspectors and governors and doctors and chaplains, so as to make up an uninvitingly bulky volume; but you may read them all through from beginning to end without coming upon a single word to

suggest that there is any blemish, any fault, any failure of any kind, lying smothered under this heap of official phrases, which would be the very gospel of official pharisaism if they were not really the results of the ignorance in which the directors are kept by their subordinates, who are the only men who know by actual experience what the true working of a great convict prison really is.

Let me tell the tale of a man whom I saw daily for several years. We worked in the same party. He attracted my notice the first day I joined it in May 1898, and I did not lose sight of him for several years. He was an Italian, a Neapolitan by birth, a thick-set, broad-shouldered, sturdy youth, probably at that time about three or four and twenty. His education was practically nil. He was in the main an industrious fellow, working very well indeed for five or six days, and then indulging in an interval of laziness. He was short-tempered and passionate, but generally cheerful and merry, as most Neapolitans are. I suppose he had been an organ-grinder or an ice-cream vendor. In a fit of frenzied jealousy he had stabbed a girl to whom he was attached.

He was undergoing a "life" sentence. He could speak only a few words of pidgin-English. There was no official in the prison who could say a word to him which he could understand. He was, therefore, left severely alone. The officer of our party was at that time a most excellent old sailor, of the name of Howse, an earnest, devout, simple-minded, God-fearing man. The officer appreciated the difficulties and hardships of this prisoner's life. He did all he could to alleviate them, and good-naturedly gave him several odd jobs which greatly delighted and interested the poor fellow. I myself tried from time to time to engage him in conversation, but I know very little of Italian,

and his delight at hearing his language spoken, even by a foreigner, was really a hindrance and embarrassment to our conversation, for directly I opened my mouth his face would light up, and, with all the volubility of his southern nature, he would literally deluge me with a torrent of words.

I instinctively felt that my halting phrases were strangely out of place, and that, having started the flood, I had better let it flow on, uninterrupted by any further word of mine. This is how I found the man in 1898. In less than a year the kindly and compassionate old officer was dead, and while we all regretted him, poor C—— felt the loss most severely, for he, poor fellow, suffered most by it. From this time he was more closely restricted to his cell, not from any ill-will on the part of the new officer, but because he failed to appreciate C——'s anomalous and exceptional position. He had always been what we English would think eccentric, but what seemed eccentricity to us was perhaps little more than the difference between Italian and English ways and habits. It is very likely that we appeared quite as eccentric to him.

I noticed with regret that his habits and behaviour were changing for the worse. He did less work, grew drowsy and listless, became violent when checked or thwarted, and painfully offensive in his personal habits. This change developed so quickly that I could no longer venture upon the timid and hesitating approaches which I had hitherto essayed. The same thing happened with other men who, feeling pity for him, had shown him kindness.

Now and then, at very long intervals, a letter would reach C—— from his aged mother. I don't suppose the poor old soul could write. I imagine it was the production of one of the public letter-writers whose tables

are so conspicuous beneath the porches of the Neapolitan churches. But, whoever wrote the letters, there was no officer at Parkhurst to read them, and but for the humanity of the then Governor, Colonel Plummer, they would have been in a very literal sense "dead letters" to their recipient. A clever, burly rascal of an "old lag," who had all European languages on the tip of his tongue, was called in, in defiance of all rules, to interpret them and to pen suitable replies. At the time when the "old lag" had completed the last of his numerous terms of penal servitude, which about coincided with the time that the humane governor retired from the service, the difficulty, of course, recurred and became insuperable. Thenceforth there was no more communication between mother and son, a result which even the authorities responsible for the fact can hardly contemplate with complacency, and this result produced other inevitable consequences.

C——'s cell was for some time immediately opposite to my own. Afterwards it was next to mine, and I watched the miserable man daily decline in mental health and wholesome physical vigour. I was so horrified at what I saw going on before my eyes that, though I did not like to interfere, I spoke to the then chaplain on the subject, and he, impressed by my representations and realizing the gravity of the case, promised that he would speak to the Roman Catholic chaplain. I believe he did. But the mischief had been done; the remedies arrived too late. C—— rudely repulsed the good priest, who had but two alternatives—to leave him alone, or to report him for misconduct. He chose the kindlier, or what seemed to him the kindlier and more merciful, course. Perhaps the most painful feature in the whole case was that the unfortunate man was himself obviously and keenly alive to the progress of his mental and moral decay. He made

the most strenuous effort to find occupation wherewith to beguile the appalling wearisomeness of the many hours he spent alone and idle in his cell. My readers will doubtless not be surprised when I say that personally he was no more cleanly in his habits than the overwhelming majority of Neapolitans. I should think that to wash himself or to wash anything would be the very last idea that would in the ordinary course of things trouble his bewildered brain. But under the pressure of the monotony of his life and the absolute necessity of which he was conscious that some kind of labour alone would save him, he developed nothing less than a mania for scrubbing out his cell. It was something to fill up the time, something to employ his idle hands, and so for many months he scrubbed out his cell daily.

At that time the officer in charge of the party was a most excellent and kindly man, known universally as "Jimmy." This poor Italian had heard the officer thus familiarly denominated, and it was as pathetic as it was amusing to hear him approach the officer in a wheedling tone, and say, "Jeemy, give me bucky." It was almost the only English he knew, and was his rendering of the conventional application, "Please, sir, may I have a bucket?" Whether the officer ever realized that "Jeemy" meant Jimmy—meant him—is extremely doubtful. Anyhow, he generally granted the request. But the task of scrubbing out the cell once a day grew to appear light to this poor Italian, who was so anxious for occupation, and when he was in the next cell to me I have often heard him groping about in the dark at midnight, splashing and scrubbing his floor with the water served out to him for personal ablutions. Of course, mental degeneration of this kind grows rapidly. The passion for cell cleaning exhausted itself, and then C—— became morose and

dangerous. I took care to keep as far away from him as I could, for I was in constant terror of a violent outburst. It came at last.

One Sunday morning when he and the other Roman Catholics on the landing were called to their cell doors, prior to parading for attendance at Mass, he flew like a wild beast upon a fellow-prisoner who had quite unconsciously incensed him. C—— was torn away at the moment that he was trying to gouge out with his thumbs the eyes of his victim. He was hurried to the separate cells, was found to be mad, and was located among the weak-minded prisoners in C Hall. There his fits of mania increased both in frequency and severity, and he was at last transferred to the criminal lunatic asylum at Broadmoor, a dangerous and raving maniac.

A few years of our English system of penal servitude acting upon his Italian nature, and aggravated and intensified by his total isolation from all adequate intercourse with his fellow-men, had sufficed to bring about this awful change, this dreadful doom.

Now, let me say, and I say it with shame and horror as an Englishman, that this is no exceptional case. I have referred to it here in detail because, as I have said, the whole miserable business passed under my own eyes. I saw it all, and as I saw it I resolved that, if my life were spared, my fellow-countrymen should know what I knew, whatever it might cost me to tell it. But, as I have said, this was no exceptional case. I have known two others, where Italians undergoing long sentences have suffered in the same way. I knew a fourth case where the madness had assumed another less violent, but certainly no less distinct, a form.

May I suggest that in the next report of the Directors a table should be inserted, showing the percentage of

insanity among Italian convicts sentenced to long terms of penal servitude? I think that if this were done our judges would realize what I am sure they do not realize at present, that a very long sentence of penal servitude imposed upon an Italian is often tantamount to condemning him to insanity for life.

There are one or two other practical suggestions which I will venture to make. The Italian Government, following the practice adopted by the other Great Powers, accredits military and naval attachés to the staff of the Italian Embassy. I believe that the duties of these distinguished officers are not very onerous, and consist largely in keeping their Government informed of our progress and policy in military and naval matters, and in contributing by their presence to the attractiveness of fashionable functions. Might not some other attaché be told off to visit periodically our convict establishments, and to give an eye to the condition and well-being of such of his fellow-countrymen as are inmates of our gaols? I am sure that so soon as such an appointment was decided upon there would be at least one Italian-speaking warder in our prisons, and a reasonable supply of Italian books for Italian prisoners.

There is one other suggestion which applies not to Italians only but to all foreign convicts, and which I put forward for consideration and discussion. It would be doubtless more difficult to carry out, and would involve legislation on our part and diplomatic arrangements with foreign countries. Why should we not extend the scope of our extradition treaties? Every sensible man, even a man who, like myself, has experienced the effect of these international arrangements, will admit, as I do unreservedly, their absolute propriety, and I can conceive that further and similar advantages would accrue to all States if they mutually agreed to extradite their convicts.

In that case, an English subject sentenced in a foreign country would be sent to serve his term of imprisonment in an English prison, and a convicted subject or citizen of a foreign State would be placed in the custody of his own country and serve his sentence under its penal regulations. Wandering Englishmen would not then be languishing, neglected and forgotten, in foreign gaols, and foreigners would be relieved from the burden and pressure of the English system, which, whatever may be thought of its merits or demerits, is evidently unsuitable and disastrous to foreigners.

The presence of the alien in our midst has been the subject of heated controversy in Parliament, of much discussion in the Press, and of legislation of a novel and stringent character. It will therefore be interesting to observe closely the alien as we find him in our gaols.

I should be the last person in the world to suggest that we ought as a nation to go out of our way to welcome or coddle the criminal alien. But so long as we receive him into our prisons, and keep him there for periods often far in excess of what is customary in his own country, subjecting him to what he considers—as an Italian once said to me—a "Draconic system" of punishment, we are bound to fulfil the duties and satisfy the claims of an enlightened humanity.

We wholly fail to do this while we neglect to provide a single official capable of communicating with the foreigner in his own language, and therefore of instructing him in his duties, of informing him of his rights, and of enabling him to avail himself of his privileges. And while we thus neglect what appears to be an obvious duty, we forbid under pains and penalties any competent prisoner from rendering him any assistance. We further manifest what can only be regarded as our callous indifference to the foreigner's well-being by omitting to provide him with an

adequate supply of books to read. In short, we deal out to him that full measure of indifference and neglect which is the proverbial fate of a stranger in a strange land.

I cannot speak with certainty as to the number of foreign convicts. The numerous statistical appendices to the Annual Reports are suggestively silent on the subject. It would be useful and possibly awkward information, and presumably for that reason it is not given, but it struck me that in prison life, as in life out of prison, the German was by far the most prominent foreign element. The German prisoner is distinguished by many of the qualities and characteristics which are so conspicuous among those of his compatriots who are pleased to take up their abode among us. As in freedom, so in prison, Hans Breitmann is masterful, aggressive, assertive and adroit. His eye for the main chance, his capacity for putting his surroundings to the best advantage are phenomenal. When he goes to gaol, his first thought seems to be, "What can I make out of it?" and with true Teutonic thoroughness he "makes out of it" all he can. In these things he compares very favourably with his English companions, whom he certainly surpasses in order and discipline, and also very notably in education and industry.

I confess with regret that very few men leave penal servitude the better for the sad experience; but the German is an honourable exception to this deplorable rule. He promptly realizes all the educational advantages that the system offers, and they are especially attractive to him, for they cost him nothing. Free education for adults may be occasionally procurable outside, but free education with board and lodging and medical attendance all thrown in is a speciality of the English convict prison. It has come in his, Hans Breitmann's, way, and he is equal to the occasion.

However little he may be able to speak or understand English when he goes to prison, he will invariably leave it speaking English like an Englishman, possessed of a wonderful command of colloquial English and a perfect mastery of English slang. He asks for the best educational books. He worries till he gets them, and he uses them with commendable intelligence. He will be sure to stock his cell with as little delay as possible with a good German-English dictionary, a good English grammar, and a good English reading-book. Novels and illustrated magazines he disdains as frivolous and feminine. He doesn't want to be entertained or amused. What he wants is to be instructed, and, above all, instructed for nothing.

He prefers that wonderful compendium of truly useful knowledge, the *Self-Educator*, to every other work in the library. What leisure he has he fills up with books on chemistry, physics, and machinery, and the result is that when he has completed his "time"—generally a short three years or five years' term—he returns to freedom, having earned the fullest remission possible, a well-disciplined, well-informed and well-equipped man. All this is very creditable to him, and also to the system which enables him to do it. I don't think he often returns to the Fatherland. Love of the Fatherland is, after all, a matter of sentiment, and he is intensely practical. So, having learned our language and our slang and our ways, he settles down to some money-making occupation and lives comfortably and honestly on and among the people who have so hospitably treated him.

I am really disposed to think that we gain as a nation almost as much from his continued abode among us as he has gained from his stay in prison. It is true that he may have few scruples, but he has no illusions; and he has

seen all he wanted to see, has gained all he wanted to gain from life in prison. He will not return there if he can help it.

In a moment of expansion he might probably confess what a very clever German convict once confided to me: "I shall stop in England. After all, it is better than Germany, for there is no compulsory military service and much less official bullying. I can lie in bed and smoke on your Sundays, which are hateful. So when my young brother Karl comes over I shall tell him that his best way of learning English is to go in as I have done for a three years' 'lagging.'"

French prisoners are not nearly so numerous as German —at least they are not nearly so conspicuous, and the few whom I have met have been men who have lived so long in England that they have been practically, if not legally naturalized. They carry with them into prison the gaiety and brightness which proverbially distinguish them as a nation. They are seldom angry or insubordinate; they relieve themselves when vexed or cross with a gibe or a sneer. They never learn to speak English well—why should they trouble to speak any language but French?—but they adapt themselves marvellously to their surroundings. Their clothes and their cells are models of neatness, and they accept all the ills of prison life with a nonchalance and a philosophy which are too obviously natural to be regarded as assumed. At most, when exceptionally annoyed, they solace themselves with a very suggestive shrug of the shoulders, which seems to say that if they abstain from protest it is because they recognize the utter barbarism of all their surroundings.

I knew but one insubordinate Frenchman, and I observed him closely, as, indeed, I had need to do, for I was often called on either to interpret orders given to him,

or to convey his requests and appeals to the nonplussed warders, who stared with amazement at his gestures and listened with blank astonishment, open-eared and open-mouthed, to what they regarded as his unearthly gibberish. I was especially interested in this fellow—a short, vivacious, impudent *gamin*, the very image of the juvenile and insolent gaolbirds whom years ago I watched as they jeered and chaffed the impassive and business-like police magistrate who holds his court in an out-of-the way corner of the Palais de Justice.

This wandering specimen of a strictly local type was a native, I think, of the South of France, and he was undergoing a sentence of three years' penal servitude. He refused to understand any rule of the prison or any order given to him, and I was, I believe, the only person at Parkhurst who enjoyed the unenviable distinction of being understood by him or of exercising any influence—and it was very small—upon him. I would harangue him openly for five minutes at a time. He would listen with a jeering grin which always made me supremely uncomfortable, for I was never quite sure whether it was occasioned by what I said, or by the way I said it, by the futility of my preaching or the faults of my pronunciation. At the close of my appeal he would give a mocking kind of laugh, and exclaim, "Tenez, mon vieux. Je le ferai puisque vous êtes bon garçon. C'est convenu. Mais ce diable de sous-gouverneur c'est un cochon!"

This opprobrious remark was applied to a late deputy-governor, the Hon. Captain ——, one of the best and kindest-hearted men who ever lived, who, on somewhat different lines, but in a similar spirit, to Colonel Plummer, ever sought to alleviate the condition and brighten the sad lives of the unhappy men among whom he moved. This villainous little French imp was the only being who ever

harboured an ill feeling, ever spoke an ill word about Captain ——. This conduct was so exceptional that I was, I will admit, extremely curious to ascertain what could possibly have given rise to such unseemly spite.

It appears that the Captain, like most Guardsmen, was an accomplished and fluent French scholar, who might be pardoned for thinking that the French which was good enough for the Boulevard St. Germain was good enough for No. 8 Landing, A Hall, Parkhurst. This was the root of the offence. X—— could not or would not understand what the Captain said. I am inclined to think he could not, for he spoke a lingo, an argot, a patois, which were unlike any French that I have ever heard spoken whether in Paris or at Stratford-le-Bow. The only explanation that I can offer of my success in making myself understood by him is that I used as a boy to be fond of riding on the roofs of Parisian omnibuses, and thus became somewhat familiar with Parisian slang.

I was once an amused spectator of an interesting little scene between a truly English warder and this mischievous French gaolbird. One Saturday afternoon a warder, in the course of his duties, desired X—— to take off his jacket, which was torn, and replace it by another. Of course, X—— could not understand, for the warder's only notion of making himself intelligible to a Frenchman was to talk to him in horribly broken English.

"Here, Balfour," cried the warder, "come over here and talk to this fool of a Frenchman. He can't understand a word I say to him. Tell him I want his jacket, and he's to put on this one instead."

I laid down my book, went across to X——'s cell, and delivered the message with all due fidelity and tact. But X—— was not to be mollified. Perhaps he understood English better than we imagined, and was offended by

what the warder had said. At all events, he refused to take off his jacket, buttoned it up defiantly, and moved off with his stool to the other end of the cell, where he sat muttering and pouting, the very image of a peevish and angry child.

I expostulated with him, and tired myself out in my fruitless attempts to wheedle him into compliance and good humour. At last I gave it up.

"He says he won't," I had to tell the warder, "and I can't persuade him. He says he'll wear the jacket he's got on or none at all."

"Oh, very well," said the warder. "Then I'll show him. Here," he cried to another officer, "come and stand at this cell door for a minute."

Then, entering the cell, he calmly and silently took Johnny Crapaud up in his brawny arms, and, despite his kicks and curses, unfastened his jacket, peeled it off his body, and gently deposited the furious mannikin and his new jacket in the furthest corner of the cell. It was the work of a moment, and was done with a good temper and contemptuous forbearance which were perfectly admirable. We left X—— chattering with rage, but the next time I saw him he was submissively wearing that new jacket.

There is a distinct colony of Scandinavians and Russians at Parkhurst, most of them, I am sorry to say, undergoing very long sentences for crimes of violence, the result—sometimes, I fear, the natural (I had almost said the pardonable) result—of an all too justifiable jealousy. They were mostly seafaring men, who had trusted to the honour and fidelity of their womenkind, and had been cruelly deceived. These are stern, silent, secretive men, giving very little trouble, bearing the burden of their crimes with a grim and pathetic patience—men, in a word, who, finding themselves deeply wronged, have

deliberately taken the law into their own hands, and who are now paying submissively, if not willingly, the inevitable penalty.

I could wish that these men, for whom, I confess, I feel no small pity, were also, in one way or other, allowed access to some kindly fellow-countryman, in whom they could confide, and to whom they could unburden themselves of their cares. Touched and softened by his sympathy, they might, perhaps, be relieved of some of the stolid sternness which they manifest, and might even ultimately attain to a measure of peace. Taken as a class, though they have committed crimes, they are far from being criminals. Their fate has been, indeed, both hard and strange. If they have wronged others, they have themselves been deeply wronged. And now, far away from kith and kin, shut up in a foreign prison, often deliberately concealing their whereabouts—nay, their very existence—from dear ones who are wondering whether they are still alive, they go through the wearisome routine of prison life with a grim resignation, an unobtrusive fortitude, such as are altogether beyond the self-complacent and self-seeking Teuton or the more volatile and fickle Frenchman. Is there not—surely there must be—some kind-hearted Consul, some compassionate compatriot, willing to visit them systematically in their prison, and thus alleviate their loneliness?

Of Spanish and Italian convicts I have already spoken as regards the sadder and more appalling aspects of their lot. They, too, on the whole, compare favourably with English prisoners. Most of them—I am speaking of the "stars"—seem to drift naturally into the prison bake-house and kitchen, where, as I have been told, their services are really useful. They are more handy, more industrious, and much quicker than the ordinary "star"

prisoner. There is one Spaniard—a rough, uncouth, merry fellow, always getting into trouble, and marvellously getting out of it—whose name, translated into English, is "Hump"! He is a general favourite, and I am not speaking disrespectfully of the excellent master-baker warder when I add that this uncouth and almost unintelligible Spanish boy has taught the master-baker many a secret of his craft.

There is another man, a Franco-Italian, a young fellow between twenty and thirty years of age, employed in the prison kitchen, in whom I became greatly interested. For many a month he had been trying in vain to make the prison officials and the higher prison authorities understand his personal troubles and anxieties. At last some kindly fellow-prisoner suggested that he should get hold of me, and to me he came. His anxiety and grievances were thoroughly typical; they were just what might be expected of a man who had no means of making his wants known to anybody around him. It appeared that his aged mother was in despair at learning that her only son was a denizen of what she persisted in thinking and calling the "English galleys." It is a name which would naturally occur to a native of the South of Europe as descriptive of an English convict prison. To such men, I am ashamed to think, our English prisons may indeed be "galleys" when they are not something worse.

This particular prisoner, who had the curious patronymic, when correctly translated into English, of "Little Grasshopper," was positively tortured by his mother's letters, which were the most pitiable jumble of maternal love and parental reproach. She was a Frenchwoman by birth, who had married an Italian. She had forgotten more than half of her native language without learning more than one-half of the language of her adopted country. Her

son showed me her letters, and anything more curious, more bewildering, or more truly pathetic I never read.

Of course, the "Little Grasshopper" wanted to answer them, but, though a well-spoken fellow, he was utterly incapable of writing an intelligible reply. He had the greatest difficulty in writing French at all, and he knew next to nothing of grammatical Italian. Under these distressing circumstances he appealed to me, or, rather, one of the very warders who had had him in charge permitted him to do so, and with great humanity begged me earnestly to do what I could for the much-perplexed youth. I was quite willing to help him, and I even flattered myself that I might be capable of constructing some kind of polyglot jargon which would give the poor old lady, his mother, the information and comfort she so sorely needed. But this was a task which I dare not undertake without the consent and sanction, expressed or implied, of the higher powers. There was a certain warder, a Mr. O'Dowd, who would have been only too glad to "run me in" had he caught me engaged in such a work of mercy.

The difficulty was urgent. I appealed to the kind-hearted school-masters. They were, as I expected, quite willing to do all they could, but they confessed that the task was quite beyond their capacity. I spoke to the chaplain. He, too, gave me, as he always did, the fullest confidence and sympathy, but he was powerless to help. I therefore advised the "Little Grasshopper" to appeal to the Governor as the only possible way out of the difficulty. I am afraid a sorry mess we made of the application, for the Governor, though stern, was a thoroughly wise and sensible man. He was necessarily guided and controlled by the stupid, inelastic standing orders. They gave the unfortunate man full permission to write to his mother,

and if he could not write (in English, of course) they permitted the assistance of the school-master. But they sternly refused him, being a foreigner, the only means of correspondence which was of any service to him—namely, the co-operation and assistance under all necessary checks of a fellow-prisoner. That was the one thing needful for him, and that was just the one thing they sternly refused. The only thing, therefore, he could get from me was regret at my inability to help him.

If the school-masters could not write to the mother in French or in Italian, they must write to her in English, and this, I suppose, they did. If the anxious mother could not understand what she received, so much the worse for her. That was a contingency which the standing orders neither contemplated nor provided for. I greatly fear that if this poor old lady is still alive, she is to this day possessed of the delusion that her unhappy boy is chained to the bench of an English galley, and is wearing out his heart in painful struggles with the labouring oar.

## CHAPTER XX

### PRISON CHAPLAINS AND PRISON LIBRARIES

A BODY of men whose opinions are particularly entitled to respect, and who are especially qualified to advise on matters affecting the general treatment of prisoners, are the prison chaplains, who do not, so far as my experience goes, receive the attention and consideration which in my judgment (and I shall not be suspected of excessive clerical proclivities) they deserve. In fact, to speak quite truthfully, they seem to be somewhat under a cloud—an official cloud, of course. It is the custom to mention them with great respect in Reports. Some one of them is at times referred to as the "devoted" chaplain, but here the official recognition ends. The recommendations of the chaplain outside the ordering of the chapel services, and sometimes within that ordering, are too often disregarded, or, to speak plainly, snubbed, by the Home Office, ignored by the governors, and evaded by the chief warders. Discipline, not devotion, the safe custody of the convict's body rather than the well-being of his soul, are the objects which are really cared about.

Hence, the chaplains are often systematically belittled by the governors and thwarted by the chief warders; for if the chief warder is an offensive person, a man, say, who owes his position to some discreditable job and not to length of service or merit, he takes a vulgar man's delight

in putting a spoke in the chaplain's wheel. Whatever the proposal may be, the chief warder has only to say he has not men enough—that is to say, warders enough—and the proposal, whatever it may be, is quashed. Then when, as is natural, the chaplains succumb to the depression and indifference which are engendered by a long-continued course of such snubbing, they are discredited as mere hirelings. There are many thankless callings in the world, but I really believe that the post of a prison chaplain is the least enviable that an educated, conscientious and gentlemanly man can fill. He is checked and thwarted at every step. He is required to provide a daily morning service, and it is so cut down in length that it is little short of a mockery. It becomes a mere matter of form, a hurried, undignified and unprofitable act of lip-worship. The Sunday services are equally curtailed. The whole thing must be got over as quickly as possible. That chaplain's ministrations which occupy the least time are the most appreciated. Hymns and Prayers, Psalms, Lessons and Sermon have all to be rattled off in about seventy minutes in the morning and forty-five minutes in the afternoon. It would really seem as if the one object of the service was to show how quickly it could be performed. It degenerates into a kind of devotional steeplechase. I can conceive of nothing more intolerable to an earnest and devout man, intent on awakening the prisoners among whom he labours to a new and better life. The discouragements that inevitably await such a man wherever he labours are intensified in the case of a prison chaplain beyond all measure. Even his apparent successes can afford him little encouragement, for they are few in number and little to be relied upon. Is it to be wondered at, therefore, that a chaplain who has seen over twenty years' service is too often a mere hireling? He

has never really had a chance; he is blamed for his want of success, and the means of success are denied to him. He is of all the officers in the prison service the one who ought most to be encouraged. He is the one that is most snubbed. The promotion of prison chaplains is so managed, or rather mismanaged, that the young and active chaplains who are full of energy and zeal are sent to the more easy-going prisons where prisoners are few and duties light, and the veteran chaplains who are naturally beginning to look forward to retirement on their well-earned pensions are condemned to finish their official life in the great convict prisons where the work is most exacting and the responsibility most onerous.

It must not be forgotten that the chaplain has opportunities which no other prison official enjoys of observing the results of the prison system, as such results are manifested in the life of the individual prisoner, in his frame of mind and mode of thought; for the chaplain is the only official who is permitted to converse freely with a prisoner without the presence of a warder.

If the Governor or Deputy-Governor has occasion to see a prisoner in his cell, he is invariably accompanied by the chief warder, or by a principal, or some other warder, and the same rule applies to the doctor. However delicate or confidential may be the subject on which a prisoner wishes to consult the doctor, a warder, generally a staid and responsible man, but none the less a third party, is present to hear and see all that passes. There are good reasons for this rule, irksome though undoubtedly it is in the case of the doctor, who might be allowed a certain degree of latitude.

But the chaplain is free from all such restrictions. He comes into a prisoner's cell whenever and as often as he likes. He stops there as long as he likes, and he leaves it

when he likes. It is obvious that in the case of a chaplain, like for instance the present chaplain at Parkhurst, who conscientiously fulfils this portion of his duty, who makes periodical visits to every prisoner under his care—it must be obvious that such a man filling such an office is, of all men, the one who is most qualified to form a sane and unbiassed judgment on the working of the prison system. He knows where the shoe pinches almost as well as the prisoner himself.

I would rather take the opinion of the excellent clergyman I have just referred to, and of the Roman Catholic priest, his honoured and worthy colleague, than of any other superior official in the prison service. The tendency of the present policy is to curb the chaplain's energy and to restrict his action. I believe this to be a great injustice and a great mistake. The chaplain should be allowed a free hand, a much freer hand than he has at present, in all his plans to raise the moral tone and to foster the spiritual life of the unhappy beings who are under his spiritual care. The chief warder's cuckoo cry of "Not men enough" whenever any new departure is suggested by the chaplain, should either be disregarded (as it might well be, for it is a mere obstructive formula) or the deficiency, if it really exists, should be made up. The power to negative all such proposals should not rest with the Governor, as at present, but with the Home Office or rather the Home Secretary only.

The chapel services should be varied and brightened and supplemented by elementary and advanced Bible classes. Sunday in prison should be made a bright, full, and busy day, not, as it is now, monotonous and mournful, a day when time is deliberately and systematically killed, and men are kept in bed like troublesome babies, because there is nothing for them to do. Greater activity and

enterprise in this direction would raise the whole tone of prison life, and would, I firmly believe, be beneficial physically as well as morally. It is my deliberate conviction that the Sundays, as now spent, distinctly and seriously impair the physical as they also degrade the moral condition of prisoners. A weekly lecture on some secular topic, some subject of current national interest, would also have a wonderful effect in brightening the prison life, and in checking the ever-increasing tendency to insanity which is largely the result of the present deadly machine-like monotony. It would tend somewhat to make up for the total absence of newspapers by preserving the prisoner's interest in the life outside the prison, the life to which he hopes to return and to which it is the manifest interest of the community that he should return qualified (not disqualified, as he is at present) for the intelligent exercise of his duties.

I have already disclaimed any pronounced clerical proclivities, and when I was in prison I never attempted to conceal my own predilection for simpler religious services than those of the Church of England. It was a matter of regret to me that the Free Churches seemed so indifferent to the spiritual welfare of their adherents. In this respect I am compelled in all candour to acknowledge, and as a Nonconformist I do so with something like shame, that the Free Churches contrast most unfavourably with the Roman Catholics and the Jews. Their indifference in this most important matter forces me most reluctantly to admit that there is something in one of the stock arguments in support of a State Church, viz. that under the voluntary system certain classes of the community would run the risk of being neglected altogether. I ought to add, in justice to the many chaplains whom I have met, that they, with one exception, treated me with

as much sympathy and consideration and showed me as much attention as if I had been a professed Churchman. I am therefore only discharging part of the debt of gratitude I owe them when I plead for fuller recognition and appreciation of their work. The sneers and complaints in which prisoners too often indulge as to the gifts and attainments of prison chaplains are too often justified by the fact that, as prison chaplains do not get a fair chance, it is very rarely that a well-qualified man will undertake the duty. The few who do are, I must confess, an exception to the general rule.

A long time ago I knew a chaplain (and therefore the head of the library) who was quite as ignorant, of secular literature at all events, as any of his prison flock. Paying a round of pastoral visits, he one day entered the cell of a highly-educated man, a solicitor who greatly affected works of science, and who was reading a famous book by a famous author.

"What are you reading there?" said his reverence.

"Hugh Miller's *Testimony of the Rocks*," was the reply.

"Oh, very good, very good indeed," was the chaplain's somewhat hasty and distinctly patronizing comment.

Then, after a moment's reflection, an apposite remark occurred to him, and he added: "You see he didn't write all jokes!" It was evident the ingenuous cleric had never heard of any other Miller than the immortal Joe, with whose works he had doubtless been familiar from his youth upwards.

I had a similar experience with the same divine about the same time (which, as I have said, was many years ago). I was at that time very anxious to learn all about Ignatius Loyola, but there was no good biography of him in either the Protestant or Catholic library.

"Do you know," I said one day, "of any good Life of Ignatius Loyola?"

"Of whom?" he exclaimed, in undisguised wonder.

"Of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Order of Jesuits."

My spiritual guide looked at me with a kind of reproachful hesitation. And then answered hastily—

"No, I can't say that I do. I once knew a man who was a friend of his and knew him well, but the fellow went wrong, and I haven't heard of him for years."

The reader will remember that Ignatius Loyola died on July 31, 1556, and as it would not have been respectful to question either the word of the chaplain or of his friend, I was forced to the conclusion that one, or both, had attained a longevity which was more than patriarchal.

In addition to his purely clerical duties, the chaplain has charge of the prison library, and is responsible for the choice and circulation of its books. As I was a librarian orderly for nearly seventeen months, and took a great interest in my work, I could, without difficulty, fill two or three chapters on the subject of prison libraries. Want of space compels me to pass by much that I could say, much that I think ought to be said, about them. I cannot refrain, however, from urging that all that has ever been said by the most ardent of enthusiasts about the far-reaching influence of literature on mankind at large applies with even greater force to its effect upon the motley and exceptional communities which are congregated in convict prisons. Such influence is primarily moral in its nature, and is certain, therefore, to be underrated and perhaps overlooked altogether by the ignorant, the thoughtless, and the indifferent; by any one, in fact, who only cares for the material aspects and results of life.

But all who have a sounder and a worthier conception not only of what life really is, but of what it might be made, and what it ought to be, will recognize that moral and mental agencies are as productive of material as they are of ethical and intellectual benefits. Every moral influence and power does, in fact, manifest itself most effectually in the material conditions and aspects of individual life. This is notably the case in convict prisons. It is literally impossible to overrate the good influence resulting from the circulation of good books among prisoners. It is often the only really successful influence. I dwell upon that fact, for I am anxious that its truth should be admitted and its importance recognized.

In so dwelling upon it, I am not disparaging other agencies or influences, but I am dwelling on a vital fact which is admitted by a few of the higher prison authorities—notably the chaplains—but is far from being generally recognized, as it ought to be, by those who control and administer prison discipline, whether they be the higher powers at Whitehall or their humbler subordinates in the prison yards and halls.

Impressed, therefore, with the value of the library as the most potent influence for good among prisoners, I feel that I must not neglect my personal experiences as a librarian orderly.

In speaking of the library I need only say a word or two about its educational department, which is under the special charge of the school-masters, and which contains a capital collection of excellent educational works. It is especially strong in arithmetic, mathematics, and geography, but decidedly weak in history. On the other hand, it is very well supplied with manuals and handbooks of trades and handicrafts. There is scarcely a trade or

profession unrepresented or unprovided for. It has books in great abundance on agriculture, on stock and poultry farming, electrical appliances, mechanical engineering, road-making, surveying, building, carpentering, joinery, plumbing, printing, painting, shoemaking, iron and brass working, watchmaking, and the like. Any artisan wishing to acquire a theoretical knowledge of these and other trades can obtain through the educational library just the books he wants. There are, in addition, the numerous and valuable modern encyclopædias of industrial work which the enterprise of many eminent publishing houses has provided in recent years. Not only are these books of great use to the novice who is desirous of learning a particular trade or handicraft, but they are of equal and even greater value to the practical artisan, to whom they afford an opportunity of studying the theory of the kind of work in which he has perhaps been engaged all his life, without knowing anything of its scientific basis and principles.

The popularity of such books among prisoners is very noticeable, and I am glad to record it. It shows that there is a real desire on the part of many misguided, tempted, and fallen men, to turn their period of disgrace and punishment to a good account and to prepare themselves by study for a life of honest industry. It is superfluous for me to urge that this attitude on the part of the prisoner is worthy of all encouragement and praise, and the way in which the authorities cater for it redounds to their credit. Nothing can surpass the care, good sense and liberality with which educational books have been selected and provided. I hope that this will always continue.

I regret that such unstinted praise cannot be accorded to the official, whoever he may be, who supervises and controls the supply of books and magazines for the ordinary library. Should it perchance be the same person

whose work in connection with the educational library I have just extolled, it must be charitably assumed that he is so interested and occupied by the latter branch of his official duties, so exhausted (officially) by his labours, and, perhaps, so astonished at his success, that he has neither time nor energy for what may be termed his literary labours. At all events, there is no trace here of the care, good sense and liberality which are so apparent in the educational department.

The ordinary library consists of some 3000 volumes, of which about one-half are works of fiction, with an additional and much-prized contingent of popular magazines, mostly illustrated, which are also largely devoted to fiction. I have not a word of complaint, though I confess to some regret, at this predominance of the lighter, or rather the very lightest, form of literature. Of course, every one acquainted with books will realize that in a library thus constituted the greater part of the fiction must be of a purely ephemeral character. In justice to the good sense, good taste, and general knowledge of prisoners, let me say that this fact is quite recognized by many of them, who austerely repudiate fiction altogether, and get the school-master to mark their library cards with the words, "No novels."

An annual requisition of books for the library, prepared by one of the school-masters, is approved and passed by the chaplain, sent up to the Home Office, and finally approved, with modifications, by some functionary there. Of course in such a process everything depends on the original selection, and that again depends on the original selector. If the school-master be a man having a good general acquaintance with current literature, or a man willing to seek advice from others who possess that qualification, then a good selection is made, and due advantage is taken of the liberality and wisdom of the nation in providing funds

for so excellent a purpose. Fortunately, when I was in the library at Parkhurst, the school-master upon whom this duty devolved was an experienced, conscientious and well-informed man who really took an interest in the matter, and did his best to stock the library with excellent books. Such a spirit was encouraged by the chaplain, who is one of the shrewdest and fairest-minded men I ever met.

Between them the requisitions sent up in my time were a credit to the men who prepared them, and enormously improved the character of the library. I may say here that the selection of books is made on much more large-minded, tolerant, and sensible principles than prevailed when I first became acquainted with the libraries of convict prisons, more than eleven years ago.

The mawkish, goody-goody stuff which was then so common has happily been used up, and has not been replaced. There is not the same silly fear of "strong" books. The works of Rider Haggard (save the mark!) are no longer unattainable. *Oliver Twist, It is Never Too Late to Mend, Paul Clifford, The Book of Snobs, Griffith Gaunt, The Cloister and the Hearth,* and other works which were formerly tabooed as unduly stimulating, are now admitted and are in frequent demand. In fact, convicts are treated in this respect as men and not as overgrown children, and, of course, the change has done little or no harm, and an infinitude of good.

If I knew to whom the credit of this change was due, I should like to thank him publicly for it. Perhaps the merit may fairly be apportioned between the chaplain's department and the Home Office. The change itself is a sign of the times, and a suggestive sign too.

When the requisitions reach the Home Office, some difficulties arise which indicate a certain degree of slackness and indifference, and I fear I must add neglect. The delay in satisfying the requisitions is unduly great, and

involves a good deal of harassing and apparently needless correspondence. Then, at times, all kinds of queer new rules and regulations spring up quite unexpectedly, and are a source of confusion and delay. Not very long ago, a most carefully prepared list of new books was returned for revision, because some Home Office wiseacre had suddenly decided that no book applied for should cost more than three shillings and sixpence. Cheap literature is one of the glories of our age. A wise economy in the cost of books is all to be recommended; it means an increase in the number of books to be supplied, a very good thing in its way. But a hard and fast rule of this kind involves the exclusion from the library of many books —historical works particularly—which it ought not to be without, or, what is quite as bad, the choice of editions so inferior in type and paper as to make them worthless for general circulation.

I can conceive no worse folly, no greater extravagance, than to stock a library with books which are unreadable. Three shillings and sixpence thus spent is three shillings and sixpence thrown away. This new rule gave rise to a vast amount of trouble and delay. The list of books finally adopted under this rule was decidedly inferior in all respects to the list originally sent up. I have since heard that the rule was found to be unworkable, and has practically been shelved. It has become a rule "more honoured in the breach than in the observance."

Another weakness of the Home Office is to discover in a book or magazine something which is deemed to be "unsuitable" for perusal by convicts, many months after the objectionable matter has been in constant circulation, and long after any possible (and very problematical) mischief has been done. Down comes an imperative order that a certain book is to be withdrawn from circulation, or a particular article is to be cut out of a magazine. I will

only suggest that this curious and belated censorship is, if not altogether ill-advised, at least singularly ill-timed. Curiosity is at once excited, and those prisoners who have not been so lucky as to read the incriminated literature are certain to hear all about it from others who have been more fortunate.

A most amusing instance of this occurred not long ago in the case of certain contributions to a well-known and influential non-illustrated magazine, where current Home Office views as to prisoners and prison discipline had been stated with great talent and much controversial skill by, it is believed, a well-known, very experienced, and very able Home Office inspector. I myself had read these "unsuitable" essays long before they were condemned.

For a great number of prisoners the yearly or half-yearly volume of an "up-to-date" magazine, with its abundance of short stories, its light and attractive articles, its numerous and admirable illustrations, and its generally healthy tone, is the most popular of all kinds of reading, and is eagerly, not to say clamorously sought after. In fact, such is the demand, or, rather, the rage for this class of popular literature, that a chaplain at Parkhurst, since deceased, once assured me in the most pathetic tones that "magazines were the trouble, not to say the curse" of his life. And just as I have mentioned above that some serious readers have "No novels" marked upon their library cards, so many others of more frivolous (or shall we say more cheerful?) tastes have their library cards headed with the formula, "Nothing but magazines."

The acuteness and pertinacity manifested in this pursuit of magazines is little short of astonishing. A man who has been for some time in prison will keep carefully stored up in his mind the exact period of the preceding year when the new magazines first crept into circulation, and some weeks before that date he will commence applying

for them. It was a frequent, and to me it was somewhat of a pathetic experience that many prisoners on the eve of their discharge would implore the librarian warder or the school-master to allow them to receive some particular magazine out of their strict turn, because they were "going home" in a few days, and would not have the money to buy the periodical which they so much affected. Whenever it was possible, with justice to others, to stretch a point in this direction, the gratitude expressed was as striking as it was obviously genuine.

Here it will be convenient to describe the manner of applying for books. Every Wednesday morning prisoners, before leaving their cells for labour, place their slates and library cards at their cell doors. On the slates they state the particular book (or magazine) they desire to be supplied with, and the fact that the application has been made is duly registered on the library cards, such notes being subsequently erased when the work desired has been supplied. No prisoner can be noted for more than two books at a time, or stand noted for more than one magazine and one other book.

These rules are perfectly simple and quite necessary and entail a good deal of work on the librarian warder and his orderlies. It will not, I fear, cause surprise when I add that the attempts at evasion, at "besting the librarians," are of frequent occurrence. In fact, many most ingenious devices are resorted to, devices which unhappily recall the crooked and perverted ingenuity which has brought their perpetrators into their present sad plight. The cards will often be shamelessly falsified, dates will be varied, and entries altered or obliterated. As red ink, which is never supplied to prisoners, is used in making the entries on the cards, it is not an uncommon trick for a man to prick his hand, so as to use his own blood as a truly disgusting substitute.

Every Wednesday the librarian warder and his orderlies visit every cell in the prison, and every bed in the infirmaries, to receive and note these applications.

Nothing more strikingly illustrates the "tone" of a convict prison than the way in which these applications are framed. By far the greater number are business-like and direct in character. The prisoner knows what he wants, and asks for it civilly. But it affords a rare opportunity for the perverse, the eccentric, the selfish and the violent to display their evil qualities. The slates are a fine field for the issue of insulting instructions, for scathing reproaches, for sarcastic allusions, for unfounded complaints, and for suggestive glimpses at the inner workings of unhealthy natures.

"Note me for a book about pirates." "I want plenty of murders." "No history." "No religious magazine." "No religion." "No boys' books." "No female novelists." "Plenty of female pictures." "Let me have a good sea yarn." "If you don't give me what I want I will see the chaplain." "Give me what I want, you spiteful old wretch!" (This was years ago, at Portland.) "Give me lots of pictures; I can't read." "I'm a poor scholar; I want large print." "Leave me nothing but high-class books." "The last book you left me was too high." "I read the book I've got now in my first lagging, twenty years ago." "No Dickens or Walter Scott." "Give me nothing but Catholic magazines." "I don't like *The Lamp* you left me; it gives neither warmth nor light." "If you give me any religious tales I'll tell the Rabbi." "I asked for the last volume of *Good Words* a fortnight ago; think of that, Mr. Lewis, and blush." And so on, and so on.

The reader will understand from this perfectly fair summary of the contents of the slates that I did not exaggerate when I stated that the library work was of an

especially trying and difficult character, and yet, somehow or other, by dint of perseverance, patience and good-humour, the result is, on the whole, both satisfactory and encouraging.

In addition to the educational and ordinary library books, there are three collections of what are called "devotional books," dealing with more sacred and spiritual topics, which are circulated among the Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish prisoners, under the direction of the Protestant Scripture-reader, the Catholic school-master, and the Jewish Rabbi respectively. The earnestness and zeal with which these good men perform these duties are beyond all praise.

Of the excellent Rabbi, in particular, it may be said that he is positively lavish in his provision for the spiritual needs of his people. Nothing can be better than the way Jewish prisoners are looked after by their co-religionists. Some of the "devotional books" in use among the Jews do not at first sight appear to be of an especially religious character, but it would ill become a Gentile to dogmatize on such a subject. *Daniel Deronda* may, perhaps, just pass muster, but I confess that *Monte Cristo* as a "devotional book" staggered me! Though from my youth upwards it has been a perennial source of delight, I had never before thought of it as a handbook of piety. Could the gifted and erratic Dumas have but foreseen this adoption of his great work as a manual of devotion in an English prison, how proud, how astonished he would have been! As an actual fact it equals any of his wildest flights of fancy. It is enough to make this famous Frenchman, our modern Alexander the Great, turn in his grave with wonder, delight, and pride.

## CHAPTER XXI

### PRISON DOCTORS AND PRISON HOSPITALS

Of the vast majority of free men, and of perhaps a smaller majority of free women, it may safely be assumed that they do not seek the regimen and prescriptions of a doctor unless they are, or fancy they are, in actual need of them. Doctors' visits, doctors' stuff, and doctors' bills are avoided by the great mass of mankind. But I shall be guilty of no lack of charity when I declare that in prison the prevailing feeling is just the other way. A large proportion of prisoners never miss an opportunity of cultivating the doctor's acquaintance, and of trespassing on his time and patience. The prison doctor has therefore a wholly exceptional duty imposed upon him. He has not only to diagnose the maladies of the really sick, but has also to detect the machinations of the malingerer. Sometimes he fails, and he would be the first, I fancy, to admit his failures. But he still more often succeeds, and successfully repels the cunningly contrived artifices and simulations of men whose lives, outside as well as inside prison, are one prolonged simulation and subterfuge.

This success is attained, too, under most difficult conditions. From the very nature of the case, the serious issues involved, the doctor must not make many mistakes; at all events, he must not err on the side of severity. Wherever there is the least shade of doubt, the prisoners must have the benefit of it. It is better that half-a-dozen

idle and scheming rogues should creep and sneak into hospital than that its doors should be shut in the face of one genuine sufferer.

I may be asked what is the reason of this great success on the part of the doctors? How does it come about that a man who dwells so frequently upon the failures and shortcomings of the penal system as a whole, should yet have such unstinted praise for this one department? I confess that this phenomenon has puzzled me. I have no doubt whatever as to the fact, and after much reflection I think that I can also detect its cause. It consists in the independence of the doctors. They are left largely alone, freed from most of the harassing and distracting technicalities of the standing orders, and allowed to show their own good feeling, good-will and sense of duty in their own way. Such failures and shortcomings as are to be found in their work are distinctly traceable to the interference and officiousness of the disciplinary authorities. I don't think I shall be guilty of indiscretion or inaccuracy when I affirm that there is always a certain degree of friction between these high officials—a persistent desire, a morbid craving to interfere, on the one hand, and a resolute and, in the long run, generally successful resistance to such interference, on the other.

It may be as well if I describe the provisions made for access by prisoners to the doctors. These provisions are distinctly cumbersome and unsatisfactory, and it is worthy of note that they are devised, superintended, and controlled by the disciplinary, and not by the medical, staff.

Every prisoner is furnished on reception with a small wooden ticket or token, on which are printed his name and registered number, the location of his cell being further marked on it in pencil. When the cell doors are first opened in the morning, a prisoner who is not seriously

ill but who desires to see the doctor in order to obtain some minor treatment—medicine for a cold, ointment for a sprain, and so on—hands to the officer who opens the cell door the ticket just described. After the breakfasts have been served out, and before the officers leave for their own breakfasts, these tickets are placed in boxes prepared for the purpose, and the boxes are forwarded to the infirmary.

The men who give out these tallies are denominated the "Casual Sick." Their names are entered by one of the infirmary staff in a book specially ruled with columns for their names and registered numbers, for the nature of the application or complaint, and for the treatment ordered. Every morning, immediately after the "cease labour" bell at 11.10, the "casual sick" are collected from their parties as they return to the prison, and are escorted to the office or consulting-room, where they are received by one of the assistant medical officers. I will not detail the various wearisome formalities which the "casual sick" go through before they obtain access to the doctor—the marchings and countermarchings, the calling-out of names, the falling into position, and the weary waiting involved.

As regards the weary waiting, I may be permitted to remark that these men are nominally sick men, "casual sick," if you please, but still sick. Now it seems scarcely consistent with their condition that on returning from work, certainly tired, probably hungry, presumably ill, and with their dinners waiting, they should be exposed to the fatigue which this process inflicts, and what is still more serious, I might even say cruel, to the inclemencies and severities of English weather.

I myself joined the ranks of the "casual sick" very rarely indeed; it was an experience which was far from agreeable, and I carefully avoided it. But in the two or three times

a year that I may have had occasion to join this detachment of invalids, I have known what it was to return to my cell and to my dinner with breeches and stockings dripping with wet, or with teeth chattering from cold. This is the considerate way in which the disciplinary staff "serve up" the sick for treatment by the medical staff! The plan in vogue at Wormwood Scrubbs and, I believe, Dartmoor, is infinitely more humane.

Of course, the numbers of the "casual sick" vary considerably. They rise and fall with the thermometer. Seventy or eighty would not be an unknown number. Thirty or forty would be an exceptionally small number. The invalids, as their names are called out, pass through an ante-room into the presence of the officiating medico, who, standing with a desk in front of him, and with the book above-mentioned before him, is flanked on one side by a principal warder, or other disciplinary officer, and on the other by a table presided over by one of the medical staff. This table is laden with formidable bottles or flagons of physic, rolls of plaster, and piles of boxes of ointment. The prisoner on entering advances to the desk, states his name and number, and complaint. The formula is something like the following:

"Smith, A 100, sir."

"Well, Smith, what's the matter with you?"

"Oh, if you please, sir, I've got a dreadful cold in my head."

"Show me your tongue. Let me feel your pulse. H'm! Dose of Number 4."

The dose is poured out into a little bowl or cup, known, I believe, as a "tot." The patient swallows it rather ruefully, wipes his lips with his sleeve, and passes out at a door opposite to the one by which he entered.

"Next man. Here, hurry up!"

"Jones, D 113."

"Well, Jones, what's up?"

"Please, sir, I've got pains all down my legs."

"How long have you had them?"

"Oh, off and on for about a week, sir."

"Dose of Number 4. Next man."

"Moses, F 900."

"Well, Moses, what is it?"

"Please, sir, I've pains in my inside that are quite cruel."

"Show me your tongue. Good. Dose of Number 4."

In this way, the fifty to eighty sick men are knocked off in something less than a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. There is no doubt occasionally a variation in the dose; but Number 4, if I remember the number rightly, is, like certain patent medicines, a panacea for all the ills that flesh is heir to.

Let it not be supposed that I exaggerate the universality of Number 4. Its frequency was a standing joke among what might be termed the habitual "casual sick." I have heard two or three of these hardened invalids agree to complain of different maladies, and bet that they would secure the same prescription, and they won the bet.

Of course at times the sharp and experienced eyes of the doctors would discern that their visitors, or rather one or two of them, were really ailing, and then the sufferers would be treated more seriously. Some would be "detained" for the afternoon, in order that their symptoms might be ascertained more carefully. Others would be at once admitted into the infirmary.

Apart from the "casual sick," any men who are obviously ill may be sent, and, indeed, are habitually sent, at any time by the officers in charge of their parties direct to the infirmary for examination by the doctor. These are called "special sick," and they are carefully examined

by the doctors and admitted as patients without more ado, whenever the doctors think it necessary, as they very often will.

About the middle term of my imprisonment, in 1900 or 1901, when my health appeared to be breaking down, I was compelled to go "special sick" two or three times. Nothing could exceed the kindness and attention which I received, and more than once I was ordered into hospital sorely against my will.

When speaking of the difficulties in the way of the medical officers, I must not fail to point out the exceptional characteristics of the men among whom they practise. The floating population of a great convict prison offers, indeed, a wide field for every branch of the healing art. As compared with the great mass of the population, the inmates of a convict prison are exceptional men, and they are gathered together as the result of what we may still happily regard as exceptional events. This is especially true of Parkhurst, which is officially recognized as an invalid station. In fact, a principal officer once boldly asserted to me that it was not a prison at all. This was a conclusion which I personally could not concur in. It was very much indeed of a prison to me. But I understood and agreed with what he meant. Though it certainly is a prison, it is much more. In fact, it combines in one inharmonious whole the most prominent features of a gaol, a workhouse, a hospital, an asylum, a convalescent home, and a cheap private hotel.

Indeed, a portion of one of the halls is popularly known among the officers as the "Hotel Simmons," a name derived from a remarkably agreeable warder who was serving there when I first went to Parkhurst in 1896.

There were at Parkhurst a number of habitual criminals who were also habitual invalids; at least, I never saw them

or knew them anywhere but in the infirmary. In justice to the doctors, it will be well to describe some of the most conspicuous among them.

I will commence by referring to three who are at once hardened criminals and confirmed invalids, and in this connection the first place must certainly be assigned to H., a tall, distinguished-looking elderly man with three letters on his arm, of which the most recent is E (corresponding with the year 1904). He is always referred to in the infirmary as "Bessie," for what reason I never cared to inquire. It would be impossible to find in all England a more vicious, quarrelsome or vindictive ruffian.

He is a living monument of the success with which a reckless, foul-mouthed, and cantankerous convict can tear to pieces all standing orders and triumph over all discipline. He never works, he never eats, and he boasts that he will do neither during the term of his imprisonment. Up to the time when I left Parkhurst he had kept his word. All his food was administered forcibly by mechanical appliances, and he is the terror of every one who has business in the infirmary, including the Governor, the medical officer and the chaplain, and especially, of course, the unfortunate prison nurses who are responsible for his well-being, who have to wait upon him and look after him. If thwarted or annoyed, he will rave and shout and scream and curse without intermission for days in succession. At times he will also resort to acts of outrageous violence which would be more natural to an infuriated savage than a civilized human being. But there is method in his madness. He can carry on these practices with impunity, for, being an invalid, he cannot be punished. He knows his advantage, and he makes full use of it. Arguments, appeals to his better feeling, threats, have all been tried, and tried in vain, and the only way to pacify him is to pet

him, and he is petted accordingly. He has even been allowed to grow a beard.

It would be ludicrous if it were not pitiable, to recite the privileges which this truly phenomenal convict has succeeded in extorting by his bad behaviour. In spring and summer flowers are sent to his cell, presumably in the hope that their proverbially beneficent influence may keep him in good humour. He is supplied with the very latest illustrated magazines, and the very best of the library books in preference to all other prisoners. He is furnished with a drawing-board, and the most contraband of all articles, a lead-pencil, in the hope that he may be beguiled into passing a few hours in comparative decency and quiet. Sometimes these bribes operate successfully for a few days; but woe to the unsophisticated dignitary who, presuming upon this peaceful interregnum, may chance to offend him by some restriction or reproach! The first article near at hand will be hurled at the head of the too confiding visitor, and it is even on record that unfortunate warders and nurses have been drenched by the contents of vessels aimed at no less a personage than the Governor himself!

There was an ill-conditioned, ungovernable lad, the most offensive type of an impudent and aggressive Cockney gutter-snipe, whose every phrase was interlarded with horrible expletives, one in particular which I had never even heard till I went to prison. This youth, known familiarly as "Freddy," spent his whole life in a state of uncontrollable rage and unreasonable complaint. I cannot pretend to quote his speech; his one question was always, "Why am I here?" his one request was always that he might at once be restored to the freedom and villainy of the London streets. It was my lot during the last weeks of my stay at Parkhurst to occupy a cell in

the infirmary almost immediately above Freddy's, and I had therefore constant and painful opportunities of becoming familiarized with his limited and foul vocabulary.

He indulged in one especial vagary which strikingly illustrated the malign ingenuity of his evil nature. At frequent intervals during the night the whole infirmary would be disturbed and distracted by his cries. He would start up suddenly, leap upon his bed, and shriek, "Why am I here? Why don't you let me out of this —— place?" and, receiving no answer to these too familiar inquiries, would carefully and conscientiously curse by name, one by one, the Governor, the doctor, the chaplain, the chief warder, and every other prominent official. When he had thus relieved his mind and temporarily exhausted his stock of blasphemous obscenity, he would lapse into silence, and presumably would slumber peacefully for an hour or two, till with a whoop and a shriek he would renew this hideous performance, this liturgy of curses, which he would repeat four or five times during the night.

Another conspicuous invalid was "Willy Wye," of specially forbidding appearance, whose crime was of an exceptionally revolting nature. He was not habitually violent, though liable at times to fits of outrageous misbehaviour. The most striking thing about him was his appearance. Of the many thousands of convicts whom it has been my misfortune to behold, Willy Wye was the one whose aspect most truly reflected the appalling degradation of his nature. A low forehead, gleaming eyes, a heavy aggressive jaw, a corpse-like complexion—he was just the type of man whom one would associate with some horrible crime, just the man from whom all decent people would shrink with irrepressible repulsion. Happily this man was not quite so evil as he looked. He would even smile at times, and he was fond

of informing the librarian and his orderlies that he was a "'ligious man," and that "'ligious books" were the only books he cared for. This was, I believe, the ruffian who quite recently hurled a large stone at the Governor, who providentially, it might almost be said miraculously, escaped what might have been a fatal injury.

I turn with relief from these horrible and exceptional cases to others of an equally instructive but less repulsive character. There is another inmate of the infirmary, who is undergoing a very long sentence, and who is familiarly known as "The King of Parkhurst," or "My Lord." He is a tall, elderly, gentlemanly man of imposing appearance, stout, florid, and apparently the picture of health. But appearances are proverbially deceptive, and this strapping invalid is treated with a tenderness, a consideration, a degree of favour such as I have never known accorded to any other prisoner. The diet ticket over his door resembles in variety and abundance the menu of a cheap *table d'hôte;* his cell is stocked with books, he is supplied with a comfortable arm-chair, he enjoys the rare privilege of a pen and ink, and he fills up much of his time in writing. He is a member of what is officially (and humorously) designated "the doctor's working party," but he does no work. His stately presence at the head of this curious band of workers is by far the most imposing spectacle at Parkhurst. He sometimes deigns to carry a rake or a broom with an air of patronizing condescension which is calculated to excite awe, amusement, or disgust, according to the idiosyncrasies of the spectators. I have no doubt whatever that he is a genuine invalid, but I should like to have, if it were possible, the unbiassed opinion of the doctor as to whether his present absolutely sybaritical life is not calculated to aggravate rather than to check any malady from which he suffers.

But curious as is the treatment, the most exceptional

treatment awarded to this prisoner, the manner in which he first attained to it is more striking still. I do him no injustice when I say that he is far from being a favourite with the warders and officers generally, and I must do the Governor and the Medical Officer the justice to acknowledge that they are not at all likely to make favourites or to tolerate exceptional favours. I may go farther, and say that I have myself observed that they have not been slow to reduce the volume of privileges which have been granted to ——, and which he now regards as his unalienable right. —— is reputed to have been on something like friendly terms at the time of his conviction with a Cabinet Minister since deceased. This, from ——'s former position in life, is by no means improbable, and the idea is current that he owes his extraordinary indulgences to this happy circumstance.

As a principal officer once said to me: "I'm sure the doctor doesn't like him, and the Governor makes no favourites, and it's not to be believed that he would be treated as he is if a hint on the subject hadn't come down from head-quarters."

"Is that likely?" I asked.

"Well, no; but it is less unlikely than that he should be petted in this way without something of the kind. Mind, I said a hint, not an order. A hint would be quite enough."

I quote the remark for what it is worth. I will only add that one or two adventurous patients have not done badly who have plucked up courage to ask for certain favours "the same as ——." I sometimes regret that I did not myself apply for "an arm-chair like ——." This was a chance which I certainly neglected.

The men who are dying of consumption or other incurable maladies are amongst the most pathetic of the hospital cases. While acting as librarian orderly I became

familiar with one or two of these unhappy beings. First let me say of them that they were treated with much more attention and skill, and; I am disposed to think, with much more sympathy than they would have received had they been free. Certainly they lacked nothing in these respects, and all honour is due to the doctors and nurses who ministered to them in their last inexpressibly mournful state. But when all is said, it is difficult to conceive of a more dreadful doom than to lie in solitary hopelessness in an iron-barred cell for many weary days and nights in the remorseless grip of a relentless and incurable disease. I cannot permit myself to believe that any one of these sufferers had the faintest expectation of ever again breathing the blessed air of freedom.

They knew that they were dying, and every one about them knew it too. The saddest feature, as it seemed to me, in their sad lot, was the fact that they were homeless and friendless, that there was no tender hand to smooth their pillows, no parent or brother or child to cheer their last hours. Their eyes, as they closed in death, would rest upon the bare walls and gloomy appurtenances of a prison cell.

Let us now turn from these depressing details to the puzzling and amusing case of a burglar who is now undergoing his second, if not third, sentence. His previous term he spent (poor man!) wholly on his back in his bed in the hospital. (This was his hard labour, and to many of us it would be hard labour indeed.) He was so confirmed a cripple that on his discharge he had to be carried home by hospital nurses. He couldn't possibly walk—not even walk home. Within a very short time—a fortnight, I was told—thanks, no doubt, to the delights of freedom and the amenities of domestic life, he recovered his health so completely as to be able to resume his old trade, and, caught once more in the act, he used his legs

so vigorously as to scale a high wall in attempting to escape. But he could not use them quickly enough. He was captured, tried, convicted, sentenced, and here comes the most surprising part of the story, the paralysis returned with the penal servitude. He is, I am told, back again in the hospital, without any hope at all of recovering the use of his limbs, at least until he has recovered his liberty also.

I must not close this chapter devoted to prison doctors without some words of recognition of their subordinates, the prison nurses, upon whom the actual work devolves. Able and energetic as the prison doctors are, they would labour in vain if they were not supported by faithful and humane assistants. There is much in the condition of the infirmary service which calls for criticism, and stands in need of reform. The subject is obviously too technical for discussion at length in a work of this character. I can but hope that what I have written may awaken an amount of public interest which will lead to a thorough investigation of all the details of the prison system. In that case I may yet have an opportunity of giving practical effect to my sincere appreciation of the services, the hardships, and the grievances of the praiseworthy body of public servants who are engaged in the disciplinary and medical work of our convict prisons.

## CHAPTER XXII

### SUGGESTIONS FOR REFORM

I HAVE spoken so frankly and fully in preceding chapters of the defects in the prison system that it will be sufficient if I indicate very briefly the lines upon which, as it seems to me, reform should proceed. I need not go into merely administrative defects or their remedies. If I did so, I should at least double the length of this work. I will confine myself to the general policy and aim of our penal administration, and even here I will endeavour to be as brief as possible.

Let me first of all endorse all that has been said by the Directors of Convict Prisons in their Annual Reports as to the advantages of a careful classification of prisoners. I look upon classification as the root, the basis, of any wise penal system.

The creation, several years ago, of a "star" class of first offenders was one of the very wisest steps ever taken by the Home Office. It was provided that "stars" should in all respects be kept apart from habitual criminals. The two classes were not to communicate with one another at work or exercise, they were, in fact, to be thoroughly and absolutely separated. The idea was a good one, and the only complaint that is to be made on the subject is that neither successive Home Secretaries nor Directors of Convict Prisons have had either the courage, or, it may

have been, the means to carry out the system to its logical conclusion. I suspect that in this respect they have been hindered by the Treasury.

Now the system of separation at present existing is perfect in theory, but most imperfect in practice. The idea is that "stars" and habitual offenders being separated, the "star" would not be exposed to the criminal associations and suggestions of habitual gaolbirds. He would not be offended by the coarse and blasphemous language in which many of the latter indulge. He would not be initiated into what may be called the social side of criminal life. He would go through his term of sentence in ignorance of the wiles, the dodges, the devices in which most habitual offenders are adepts; and thus he would have a chance of regaining his freedom uncontaminated by those evil influences. The "star" is not supposed ever to have the opportunity of talking or listening to an habitual criminal. As I have just said, I have nothing but praise and approval for this idea, and my complaint is that it is not properly carried out, because it is attempted under impossible conditions. I saw the present system in practice at Wormwood Scrubbs, at Portland, and at Parkhurst, and in all those places, although I do not suggest that Governors and officers did not do their best, yet in all cases it was a sorry failure, little better, in fact, than a make-believe. I go further, and I confidently affirm that it will continue to be a failure so long as "stars" and habitual criminals are herded together in one and the same prison.

To give the scheme a fair trial and to make it a success, the establishment of a separate "star" prison is an absolute necessity. In saying this I am expressing the deliberate conviction of every "star" prisoner with whom I have conversed.

The objections, I presume, are entirely financial. Naturally, a small prison will always be more expensive

than a large prison, and there is no doubt about it, the establishment of a prison exclusively for "stars" would be expensive. What I may call the head-quarter staff of a large prison and of a small prison must be nearly the same. In both cases there is required an expensive Governor and his equally expensive train of advisers and assistants. This would undoubtedly lead to additional outlay. I imagine that with a reasonable amount of good-will on the part of the authorities, some of this additional cost might be obviated. But, with all the good-will in the world, there would doubtless be an increase of expense. There would also be a considerable amount of trouble in readjusting the disciplinary staffs and in rearranging the employment of the "stars." But, given the good-will, this I am sure is not beyond the capacity of the many able and experienced men who are at present occupying superior and subordinate positions in the convict service.

We have to face, therefore, at the outset, the fact which it would be idle and unfair to conceal or ignore, that, in the first instance at all events, the establishment of a separate convict prison for "stars" would involve additional expense. The one question, therefore, is, or at least ought to be, would the results of such expenditure recoup the additional outlay? My opinion is strongly that it would. I believe that the gains, both morally and financially, would be considerable. Let me deal briefly with the latter first.

"Star" prisoners as a body are men of considerably higher intelligence and education than the great bulk of habitual offenders, and one of the great difficulties which the authorities have to contend with is to provide "stars" with suitable and remunerative labour. To employ men who have never used any mechanical tools in their lives in mechanical work is a waste of time and energy. They never become really proficient. They are bunglers when they begin, they continue bunglers to the end. They

regard their work as a delusion and a farce, and the officers who watch over them look at it in the same light. I was myself employed at Portland first in the shoemakers' shop and then in the tinsmiths' shop, and though I honestly tried to become a skilful cobbler and a clever tinsmith, I acknowledge with all humility and regret that I did not earn my meagre daily food in either capacity.

The nearest approach to a successful solution of the problem has been found in the printers' shop at Parkhurst, where sixty or seventy "stars" are usefully engaged in printing and bookbinding. The work they undertake is, I believe, exclusively, or almost exclusively, for the Prisons Department of the Home Office. The management, as I have already stated, is hopelessly amateurish and inadequate, and this I am prepared, if need be, to prove.

But, in spite of this, the results (though not nearly so brilliantly successful as they are represented) are by no means discouraging. Now, with the establishment of a separate prison, the business of the printers' shop could be largely increased. Many men who are now engaged in uncongenial and unsuitable trades at Portland could be introduced to what has proved to be a desirable and profitable employment. The printing work done for the Prisons Department might be supplemented by similar work for other Governmental Departments; and the bookbinding, which is under the existing system very well carried out indeed, might be extended to the requirements of nearly all the Government offices. The hours of labour might be modified and lengthened, for "star" prisoners admittedly do not stand in need of such close and unremitting vigilance as professional criminals, and therefore a good deal of time that is now frittered away might be profitably occupied.

I would make printing the staple employment of the great bulk of "star" prisoners. There are branches of

printing which could be undertaken, such as printing for the blind, which would prove of great national benefit, and which would not compete to any appreciable extent with outside labour. The rougher "star" prisoners, agricultural labourers, gardeners, porters, and others, could be employed in outside work, and artisans and mechanics could be grouped together in a party engaged in all kinds of miscellaneous manual labour; shoemakers in making and mending boots and shoes, tailors in making and mending garments. A few of the hungrier and sturdier "stars" could fulfil the domestic duties of cooks, bakers, laundrymen and cleaners. In this way the "star" prison might be made a homogeneous institution, and though it might cost more to keep up, it would, I believe, pay better in the long run than any other prison in the country.

To conclude what I need say on this head, it is obvious that no serious attempt can be made to differentiate the treatment of first offenders and habitual criminals until such a prison is established. That some difference ought to be made will, I believe, be admitted by those who are most familiar with the actual working of the penal system.

It is now generally acknowledged that the habitual criminal fares really better under existing conditions than the "star." This of course is more than an anomaly, it is a scandal and an abuse.

The "old lag" has work to do which, if not congenial to him, is at least work with which he is acquainted, and in which he may have occasionally engaged, not only when he has been in prison, but also very probably during some brief interval of freedom. The "star," on the other hand, is subjected to the hardships and the drudgery incidental to a new and unaccustomed occupation. The "old lag" when he returns to prison returns to the society of men among whom he has lived for long years, among whom probably he may have spent his whole lifetime.

On the other hand, the "star" is thrown into an entirely different walk of life to that which he has occupied hitherto. The appearance, the modes of thought and expression, and the personal habits of those among whom he finds himself are absolutely strange to him. For some months at least he is dazed and bewildered, and is, to use a popular term, a fish out of water. The "old lag" in most cases is provided with food more abundant in quantity and often quite as palatable to the taste as that to which he had been accustomed in freedom. The "star," on the other hand, has to put up with a coarse dietary which is often inadequate and always incongruous. In addition to all this, the "star" suffers from a sense of humiliation, degradation and remorse such as is quite unknown among habitual criminals.

I fear that I have not referred as fully as I ought to have done to the feelings of remorse, of genuine unadulterated remorse, which I have observed among my companions of the "star" class. It is, I know, very difficult to discriminate between the sorrow which is felt for wrong-doing and the vexation which results from its detection and punishment. Of course, in prison, as in life at large, much so-called remorse is really made up of the latter feeling, but I should be false to the duty I owe to many unfortunate and unhappy men whom I have met in prison if I did not acknowledge that I have been the witness of much absolutely genuine remorse. God alone knows how many anxious, broken-hearted men spend the solitary hours they are doomed to pass in their cells in bitter self-reproaches, in tears, in lamentations, and in penitential prayer for Divine pity and pardon. The men who experience these heart-rendings, seldom obtrude them upon their fellow-prisoners, rarely impart them to the chaplain or refer to them in the letters which they write at long intervals to the dear ones on whom all their human

affections are centred. They bear their sorrows in secret, always submissively, and often uncomplainingly, and, be their sentences long or short, they carry with them to their graves the sense of a supreme and overwhelming grief, a wound which even time itself will never wholly heal.

Now the "old lag" is an absolute stranger to any of these emotions. The prison, its ways, its social life, its discipline, are mere incidents in the life of crime which some of them have deliberately chosen, or to which others have been doomed by circumstances from their very infancy. I should be sorry to speak with undiscriminating harshness about "old lags." It is the disgrace of our civilization and of our religion that hundreds of them have never had a fair chance in life. From the first slip they made they have been shunned by society and hunted and shadowed by the police, so that in all that I am saying now, I am not entering into the moral aspects of crime or of criminals, but am simply insisting upon the obvious fact, which every "old lag" will himself admit, that the "star" prisoner—the first offender—must, in the nature of things, suffer more than the man who is doing his third, fourth, or fifth "lagging."

The effect, therefore, is that "star" prisoners, who ought to suffer less, suffer more than old offenders, and this must continue to be the case while "stars" and "old lags" occupy the same prison. Every prison official would admit that under such conditions it is impossible to make a difference in the treatment of the two classes of offenders. The "old lags" would not stand it. They would rise in revolt against the authorities, and would probably conspire to wreak their vengeance also upon the more favoured "stars." A separate "star" prison is therefore a necessity.

I have spoken a good deal in praise of prison chaplains, and it is only fitting that I should now put on record my absolute conviction that the chaplains should have granted

to them a much larger degree of liberty in the exercise of their spiritual functions. They ought not to be checked and hampered and thwarted, as I have seen them, by purely disciplinary considerations. No doubt discipline should be the first consideration, but the moral and spiritual agencies which the State provides should not be sterilized but fertilized by the action of discipline.

I am compelled to repeat that the Protestant Free Churches of this country are far from doing their duty towards those of their numbers or adherents who are sent to prison. In this respect they compare, as I have said, very unfavourably with the Roman Catholic and Jewish bodies. The number of Nonconformists in convict prisons is much larger than is generally supposed, or than is shown by any statistics. Often, during my long stay at Parkhurst, a majority of the members of the Church of England choir were Nonconformists. They were treated by the chaplain with unfailing fairness and kindliness; they were ignored altogether by their own communions. Occasionally a Nonconformist minister would visit a particular convict—I was myself greatly helped and assisted by such visits—but there was no systematic effort whatever made by the Nonconformist bodies, except the Wesleyans, to get at their own people or minister to their spiritual needs.

The Church Army, a most excellent institution, undertakes frequent missions to prisons, and it is much to be regretted that the Free Church organizations, including the Salvation Army, do not insist upon having the same privileges. The difficulties in the way are, no doubt, largely official, but those difficulties are accepted and connived at by the lethargy of the Free Church bodies. Take Parkhurst as an example. There would be no difficulty whatever in holding at least one, or for that matter, two, Nonconformist services every Sunday. There is a capital

school-room, which is not occupied at all on Sundays, and which could be well put to so excellent a purpose. All that would be necessary is that the Nonconformist ministers in the neighbourhood should agree among themselves upon a regular rota of attendance, and should press the Home Office to give them facilities for the experiment. I understand that Nonconformist services are now held in workhouses, and I cannot for the life of me see why they should not also be held in prisons.

While speaking thus frankly on this subject, I would not fail to do justice to those few Nonconformist ministers whom I have known, who, in spite of official discouragement, the apathy of their own religious bodies, and the indifference of prisoners, have trudged in all weathers, at all seasons of the year, to carry words of help and comfort and sympathy to the outcasts from their own folds.

One great question remains for me to glance at. That is, the way the State should deal with the habitual criminal.

The difficulties which beset the problem are in the last degree complex. They spring from the national character, from the special features of our political institutions, from our peculiar criminal jurisprudence, from our love of even-handed justice, our respect for individual rights, our insistence upon publicity, our humanitarian scruples, and our sturdy antagonism to the arbitrary exercise of authority. All these qualities are excellent in their way. May we long continue to display them!

They are the features which naturally belong to a nation of freemen, but they make it very difficult to deal effectively with habitual criminals, who, it should be remembered, constitute a class—one might almost say a caste—among us, living in constant hostility to society, waging a ceaseless warfare against its laws, its orders, and its rights.

If we deal sternly with the habitual criminal, we arouse

the antagonism of the humane, if we deal leniently we provoke the protests of those upon whom the habitual criminal preys. The consequence is that we have no settled, systematic method at all. When from some cause or other the behaviour of the habitual criminal has become too outrageous, the British public lose their temper, an outcry is raised, long sentences are imposed, and prison discipline is made more harsh. Then when the fit has passed the voice of the humanitarian is raised again. It is observed that the increased severities have effected little good, but much individual suffering. The pendulum then swings to the opposite extreme, and all the activity of the Home Office authorities is directed to the paring down of severities and the amelioration of the conditions of prison life.

This has been going on to my own personal knowledge and observation for the last forty years. It may be said to have prevailed ever since the abolition of transportation and the substitution of the present system of penal servitude.

Looked at from whatever point of view—whether we regard it as intended to reform, to deter, or to punish—the existing system has failed. It is not necessary to go into figures or to do more than glance at the facts in order to substantiate this assertion.

The presence at our convict stations of an ever-increasing number of convicts who have undergone three, four, five, and even six successive sentences of penal servitude, who return to penal servitude as a matter of course (so much so that the authorities expect and welcome them back), who regard their previous terms of incarceration without shame, and contemplate future terms without misgiving, all of whose lives are made up of alternate periods of lawless licence in freedom and contented self-indulgence in prison, this is surely evidence enough that penal

servitude has not reformed, does not deter, and cannot truly punish.

To put the case fairly, as between the two policies, the severe and the lenient, it must be borne in mind that a large proportion, if not the great majority, of old lags have had practical experience of both policies, and of many blends and varieties of both, and that each and all have proved alike ineffective. We have tried to reform these men; we have preached to them, preached at them; prayed over them, prayed with them; sung hymns for them, and persuaded them to sing hymns for themselves; we have supplied them with Bibles, prayer-cards, prayer-books, hymn-books, devotional books; we have employed Scripture-readers to visit them, school-masters to educate them, and chaplains to provide them with spiritual counsels and consolations. To all this the old lag submits, more or less unwillingly, because he cannot help it. It all becomes so familiar to him that at last he grows captious and critical. He assumes the tones of an expert. He chides the school-master for his idleness, the Scripture-reader for his inconsistencies, the chaplain for his shortcomings, but he is never changed, much less reformed. He entered prison a heathen, he lives there a heathen, and he departs, when his sentence is expired, a heathen still. The only moral obligation which he acknowledges, and that most imperfectly, as all detectives could testify—is his loyalty to his "pal."

We have not deterred him. We have treated him with harshness and severity, we have most persistently and consistently snubbed him, we have crushed out of him all self-respect, if he ever had any, we have humiliated and degraded him, we have teased and worried him with minute and vexatious changes of discipline, we have tortured him with the dry bath and other offensive searchings, we have hindered the light of heaven from

fully penetrating into his cell, we have denied him reasonable access to his friends, we have tried to deprive him of the faculty of speech, we have sometimes made him ill, we have often driven him mad, and after all this he remains a wilful, deliberate lawbreaker. He turns over in his own mind how he might have escaped detection in the past, and resolves upon resuming his life of crime directly he is quite clear of the prison gates. We have not deterred him, not in the least; we have only embittered and hardened him, and when he goes out of prison the last state of that man is worse than the first.

And do we really punish him? Hardly. He is above all a calculating, scheming, selfish man. We weary, annoy and irritate him, but mere weariness, annoyance and irritation, though troublesome at the time, are not to be compared with the hunger, the cold, the damp, the doubt, the dejection and the uncertainty which are the cruel lot of myriads of the honest poor. The old lag gets in prison his decent bed, his regular food, his daily exercise, his modicum of labour, his warm cell, his sufficient clothing, and striking a balance, especially in cold weather or a stormy night, he will admit to himself, as one of the fraternity once admitted to me, "There are many worse things in life than a lagging." And so there are to any man who has lived a life of poverty, who is devoid of self-respect and indifferent to the esteem of his fellow-men.

In the interest of the community at large, of the millions of honest poor among us, and even of the habitual criminals themselves, I suggest that penal servitude as now applied to the latter should give place to a better, a more effectual, a thoroughly preventive system.

And what should this new system be? After considering this problem closely for years, I confess that it seems to me that the only way is to revert, for hardened habitual

criminals, for all men who are convicted, say, for a fourth time, to the system of transportation for life—of perpetual exile from the country whose laws they have persistently abused, and whose gentler and more tender methods of punishment they have flouted and despised.

In considering this suggestion for the expatriation of habitual criminals—of the men who refuse to live at peace with society—there is no need to recall or dread the horrors and abuses which discredited the transportation of by-gone days. All these can be averted by the many changes which steam and increased medical science have effected. The new system should be safeguarded by every precaution which the humanity and intelligence of modern life can suggest, and I would most strongly insist that it should be restricted to the men who have shown themselves incorrigible. It should hit none but the declared enemies of law and order. If a man is not cured of his lawless propensities by three terms of penal servitude, the State is surely not to be blamed if it resorts to some other and more drastic process. The only chance of such men being reclaimed and recalled to a new life will be found in a new country and under new social conditions.

I would introduce many reformatory and alleviating details. The man so transported should never return to his own country, but he should have opportunities of obtaining by good conduct a considerable mitigation of the worse hardships of imprisonment. He should have opportunities of settling in partial liberty, and of being joined after a time by his wife and younger children, and of enjoying to the full the profits of his industry.

So strongly am I impressed with the advantages of such a policy that if no other suitable locality could be found—and the difficulty of finding a locality seems to be the most serious practical objection—I should be disposed to try the experiment in some one of the healthier regions of

our vast possessions among the more salubrious tablelands and highlands of Africa.

But are we shut up to such a course? We have heard much lately of the ruin which is impending over the island of St. Helena by the withdrawal of the handful of Imperial troops whom we have hitherto stationed in that remote dependency. It actually appears that it has flourished on what it has made out of Tommy Atkins or picked up from him. We made use of the island during the Boer war as a place of detention for some thousands of Boer prisoners. Why not use it now as a penal settlement? We should not, I am confident, need to send there anything like the same number of habitual criminals. Great and growing as is their number under the present system, the mere adoption of this change would infallibly first check the growth and ultimately eradicate the genus.

Let me remind the reader that, in making these suggestions, I can claim for them, without presumption, that they are not the preconceived views—humanitarian or otherwise—of a mere theorist. They are the outcome of the actual experience of a man who has had, unhappily, exceptional opportunities of studying the penal system from within. I entered prison with an absolutely open mind. I accepted my lot with submission. I harboured no feelings of hostility against the administration of justice. I was not on the lookout for grievances. What I suffered—and God only knows how much I suffered—I have kept to myself. I never made a complaint against an officer; I never refused to obey an order. I tried to cultivate relations of sympathy and good-will towards the unhappy men with whom I was condemned to associate, and who were condemned to associate with me. For some of them I feel now unbounded pity and genuine regard.

I was struck from the first with the general humanity of the warders as a class, and with the good temper and

kindliness with which they discharged their very onerous duties. I say, advisedly, that if this existing system could have succeeded, they would have made it a success. I kept my eyes open. I was not on the lookout for blunders and shortcomings; but I was soon convinced that it was a huge mistake, a woeful and hopeless failure. I discovered that it presses most heavily on the first offender, and deals most tenderly with the habitual criminal. There is severity where there should be leniency, and leniency where there should be severity. Reformatory agencies, spiritual and moral, are flaunted in the reports and blue-books, and flouted in the actual prison life. The conditions of that life, as described by me in these pages, its silent system, its denial of adequate open-air exercise, its indigestible and irrational dietary, its indelicacy, all tend to foster what is most abominable in human nature. For one man who may escape from its corruption half-a-dozen become its miserable slaves.

All this is known fully to only two sets of men—the officers who carry out the system, and the prisoners who endure it. The mouths of the former—the officers—are shut. They dare not say publicly what they know, nor repeat what they say to one another. If, therefore, the truth is to be stated at all, it must be told freely and frankly by some man who can speak with the exceptional authority which is derived from actual experience, spread over a long term of years; it is thus I have tried to tell it.

Feeling this, I have not sought to strengthen my proposals by the opinions of other people; but, if there is a man in all England whose views on this subject are entitled to deference and respect, it is surely the venerable head of the Salvation Army. This is how General Booth recently referred to the subject at Liverpool—

"As for the criminal classes, he would make their punishment short, but severe, followed by employment;

and instead of allowing the irreclaimable to prey upon society, he would place them on a convict island."

I can, therefore, claim for this suggestion the approval of the man who, beyond all others in this generation, is seeking to raise the spiritual and material condition of the fallen and the degraded.

Briefly, then, and to sum up this prolonged account of penal servitude, the scheme of reform which I submit with all diffidence is—

1. A wiser, more intelligent, and more humane treatment of first offenders in a separate prison.
2. A continuance of the present system, with many modifications of its administrative details, for men convicted a second time.
3. The present system minus its concessions, remissions and favours for men convicted a third time —a last chance, in fact—and
4. For men who refuse that chance perpetual expatriation.

All these should be accompanied by—

5. A greater uniformity, or rather consistency, of sentences for similar offences. Their length should not be so dependent as it is at present upon the personal idiosyncrasies of individual judges. There should also be provision for the periodical review of all long sentences at stated intervals.

On some such lines as these the existing evils, the present scandal, can, I think, be grappled with and overcome.

For myself, I can say with all sincerity that if I am spared to see that great result, if my voice may in the least degree contribute to it, I shall not regret all that I endured during my life in prison.

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